



JESUS: THE GIVER OF HO



FOR BUREAUCRATIC REASONS

WE SETTLED ON ONE ISSUE, WEAPONS OF MASS
DESTRUCTION (AS JUSTIFICATION FOR INVADING
IRAQ) BECAUSE IT WAS THE ONE REASON
EVERYONE COULD AGREE ON.

PAUL WOLFOWITZ
VANITY FAIR INTERVIEW
MAY 28, 2003

WE KNOW WHERE THEY ARE.

THEY'RE IN THE AREA AROUND TIKRIT AND BAGHDAD
AND EAST, WEST, SOUTH AND NORTH SOMEWHAT.

DONALD RUMSFELD
ABC INTERVIEW
MARCH 30, 2003

KATHY KELLY

President Bush tried to convince the U.S. public that everything has changed since 9/11. Things should change, but they haven't. We should try to dislodge President Bush and his cabal from the White House, but we must never be fooled into thinking that this would cure us of the terrible illness that sickens the corporate-led globalization campaigns. It's a sickness caused by short-sighted greed and stubborn refusal to recognize basic rights of people and beings on this planet.



THE FIRST TIME I MET KATHY KELLY WAS IN THE AUTUMN OF '99. I WAS 19 AND RELUCTANTLY STUDYING FILM AT COLUMBIA COLLEGE. SHE WAS INVITED TO SPEAK AT MY PEACE STUDIES CLASS, WHICH I HAD CHOSEN TO TAKE ONLY BECAUSE IT FULFILLED A FEW HUMANITIES CREDITS. I REMEMBER THAT DAY VIVIDLY.

SHE BEGAN HER TALK BY WALKING AROUND THE ROOM AND ASKING EACH OF US TO SHARE OUR MEMORIES OF 'DESERT STORM'. I, OF COURSE, WAS ONLY 10 DURING THE GULF WAR. I WAS IN FIFTH GRADE AND RECALLED ASKING MY TEACHER, MS. BENCIVENNI, WHEN THE WAR WOULD END. "THE WAR WILL END SOON," SHE SAID. "YOU WILL NEVER HAVE TO THINK ABOUT IT AGAIN, ONCE IT'S OVER."

AFTER HEARING THAT, KATHY BROUGHT ONE OF HER TINY FINGERS TO HER CHIN, CLOSED HER EYES AND LET OUT WHAT IS NOW A VERY FAMILIAR, "HMMMM...."

"YOUR TEACHER WAS RIGHT, JOE," KATHY SAID, "YOU PROBABLY NEVER HAVE TO THINK ABOUT THE WAR, IRAQ, OR THE PEOPLE OF IRAQ EVER AGAIN. IRAQ IS NEVER IN THE NEWS, UNLESS DURING A SEGMENT VILLAINIZING SADDAM HUSSEIN. HOWEVER, SHE WAS WRONG IN THINKING THE WAR WOULD BE OVER SOON." THEN KATHY STOOD BEFORE THE CLASS AND DESCRIBED IN DETAIL HOW THE WAR HAD NEVER ENDED. IT HAD JUST BECOME A MORE SILENT AND A MORE DEADLY KIND OF WAR, FOUGHT WITH SANCTIONS THAT COULD STARVE A NATION AND KILL HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF IRAQIS. THE ENTIRE CLASS HUNG ON HER EVERY WORD, AND MOST OF US REMEMBERED IRAQ FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ALMOST A DECADE.

NOW I WAS FACED WITH A MORAL DILEMMA. ON ONE HAND, I WANTED TO GO HOME AND SLEEP, AND FORGET ABOUT THE STATISTICS, AND THE U.N. REPORTS AND GENOCIDE BEING PERPETRATED

Kathy Kelly of Voices in the Wilderness

VITW

Interview by Joe Proulx

BY THE COUNTRY IN WHICH I LIVE. I WANTED TO WAKE UP THE NEXT DAY AND ACT AS IF I HAD NEVER HEARD ANY OF THIS. I HAD ALWAYS NAIVELY ASSUMED THAT THE WORLD'S EVILS WOULD BE SORTED OUT BY SOMEONE ELSE, AND SAW NO REASON TO DIRTY MY HANDS IN THE MESS CREATED BY THE U.S. MILITARY FORCE. ON THE OTHER HAND, KATHY'S STRENGTH WAS INSPIRING. A WOMAN FROM A VERY HUMBLE IRISH CATHOLIC BACKGROUND, NOW ALMOST 50 YEARS OLD, HAD SO MUCH POWER BECAUSE SHE WASN'T AFRAID OF THE U.S. BECAUSE I SAW HOW KATHY ACTED ON THE DICTATE OF HER CONSCIENCE INSTEAD OF THE DICTATES OF LAWS CREATED BY MAD MEN, I KNEW I HAD TO FOLLOW IN THE PATH SHE HAD CREATED. THAT DAY I CHOSE RESISTANCE OVER APATHY. I DISCOVERED A NEW POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS.

THE VERY NEXT DAY I DROPPED OUT OF SCHOOL, AND KATHY TOOK ME UNDER HER WING. NOW, THREE YEARS LATER, I HAVE TRAVELED TO IRAQ AS WELL, BREAKING THE U.S. LAW BY BRINGING

A SYMBOLIC AMOUNT OF MUCH NEEDED MEDICINE TO PEOPLE IN IRAQ. NOT ENOUGH AID TO LAST MORE THAN A DAY IN A PEDIATRIC HOSPITAL IN BASRA, BUT ENOUGH TO GET THE ATTENTION OF THE U.S. STATE DEPT. (AND PUT ME AT RISK OF UP TO 10 YEARS IN PRISON). I LET MADELINE ALBRIGHT KNOW THAT I TOO ACT ON THE DICTATES OF MY CONSCIENCE AND NOT THE DICTATES OF THEIR IMMORAL LAWS.

KATHY AND I HAVE BECOME VERY CLOSE WHILE WORKING TOGETHER AT VOICES IN THE WILDERNESS (VITW). AFTER KATHY GOT BACK FROM SPENDING TWO MONTHS IN BAGHDAD LIVING AMONGST ORDINARY PEOPLE DURING THE *Shock and Awe* CAMPAIGN, *MediaReader* ASKED ME TO SIT DOWN WITH HER AND SORT OUT THE NEXT STEPS FOR ACTIVISTS IN THIS COUNTRY DURING THE BUSH REICH'S WAR ON TERRORISM.

-JOE PROULX

...I finally felt that I could no longer write papers about "the preferential option for the poor" or sing "Our God Hears the Cry of the Poor" and yet never see any poor people.

***MediaReader:* When did you realize your political consciences?**

Kathy Kelly: I think of myself as a late bloomer when it comes to reaching political consciousness. I was good-hearted, I aimed to please people, but I managed to go through the Viet Nam War (in my early twenties) like Brigadoon in the mist. While studying for a master's degree in theology, taking most of my courses at the Jesuit School of Theology in Chicago, I finally felt that I could no longer write papers about "the preferential option for the poor" or sing "Our God Hears the Cry of the Poor" and yet never see any poor people.

I knew of a Catholic Worker house of hospitality on the north side of Chicago. A friend of mine offered to drive me up there and introduce me to a nearby soup kitchen. After just a few encounters with "the do-gooders ghetto" in Uptown, I decided to move there. Making political decisions has been much easier ever since then.

What were your previous political affiliations?

It became clear, living amongst impoverished people, that my immediate neighbors needed my assistance much more than the federal government's bloated defense budget. I became a war tax refuser. Social life revolved around the soup kitchen. People who came there as guests generally had no other means for meals. Many stayed at the overnight shelter or slept in abandoned buildings. Wretched poverty afflicted most of my neighbors in Uptown, but those who were punished most for being poor were the children and youngsters. They'd committed no crime, and yet, as they grew up, their options were grim: jail, addiction, death.

I felt very strongly that the most important question we face is this: how can we learn to live together without killing one another and destroying the planet? I wanted very much to affiliate with nonviolent communities that addressed this question. This alignment led to prisons and war zones, working with others for the further invention of nonviolence. It has also allowed me chances to rub shoulders with some of the finest, kindest people in the world. What's more, I've felt fortunate to know a truth and to know it passionately. The truth is that we are all part of one another.

Could you describe what will be the next steps for VitW?

The sanctions that brutalized and exhausted ordinary Iraqi civilians have finally been lifted. The U.S. now has full dominance over Iraq's oil wealth, at least for the immediate future. After three weeks of intense bombardment, using one billion dollars' worth of explosives in just the first night of the *Shock and Awe* attack, the U.S. has now begun an occupation which seems far more intent on securing U.S. military and political interests than on meeting rising needs of Iraqis who face a humanitarian catastrophe. Voices in the Wilderness will continue to "spotlight Iraq" in a campaign to tell the truth about this most recent war. We will try to monitor progress in destroying unexploded ordnance (such as cluster bombs and landmines), continue to clamor for an end to the use of depleted uranium in weapons manufacture and monitor whether the U.S. is meeting its responsibilities, as an occupying power, to meet security needs in Iraq.

We believe that one of the best ways to prevent a future war is to effectively counter the propaganda that surrounded this war. We want to help persuade those who believed the war was wrong that they were right in the first place. The war was unjust, illegal, immoral, avoidable and counterproductive. We will rely on our team in Iraq, along with news reports from alternative media sources, to report about conditions in Iraq.

We sadly recall that following the first Gulf War in 1991, 47,000 children died from malnutrition and disease caused by the war and sanctions. Will Iraqi children continue to die because of water-borne diseases such as cholera, typhus, dysentery and diarrhea during the summer months when they are most at risk from drinking contaminated water?

Unable to supply evidence that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction or any intent to use such weapons against the U.S., how can the U.S. justify *Operation Shock and Awe* as a war of self-defense?

These and many other questions will be addressed through circulating literature in the "Spotlight Iraq" campaign. Summer interns in the Chicago office will help us set up a "Wheels of Justice" bus tour, numerous speaking engagements, mailings and canvasses intended to promote crucially needed education and truth telling about U.S. policies toward Iraq.

The Bush administration links many countries to terrorism through their "axis of evil", how will VitW link these countries into its campaign while keeping the "spotlight" on Iraq?

Threats of future pre-emptive strikes place Iran, Syria, and North Korea in the crosshairs of U.S.

“defense” planning. Convinced that “where you stand determines what you see,” we’ll try to learn more about these countries by setting up study groups and maintaining communication with friends who travel to or live in Iran, Syria and South Korea.

Very much on our minds is the constant need to non-violently resist the roots of war in our own locales. In Chicago, we challenge the Boeing Corporation, which has established headquarters here. We’ll also work on counter-recruitment efforts in our city which sadly hosts one of the strongest Junior ROTC networks in the U.S. War tax refusal and civil disobedience protests at weapon facilities are important components of such resistance. We’re also committed to simplify our lifestyles, aiming not to depend on the U.S. capacity to take other people’s precious and irreplaceable resources at cut-rate prices.

Should activists support any particular religious or political groups in Iraq?

Voices in the Wilderness particularly wants to support nonviolent efforts to resist any abuses committed in Iraq by U.S. occupying forces. As political identities and allegiances emerge in Iraq, we don’t feel that we should advocate any particular group. Given time, we think Iraqi people can arrive at a suitable form of governance for themselves. During this time of transition, a neutral third party committed to unarmed peacekeeping would be ideal. The U.S. has been dismissive toward the United Nations, and yet we believe the U.N. would be most prepared to assist the Iraqis with oversight and protection as they pursue the arduous tasks of rebuilding civil society and rehabilitating their horribly damaged infrastructure.

How do we as activists expose the lies about the liberation/occupation?

Eyewitness accounts telling of Iraqi reactions to the U.S. “liberation” should be disseminated as widely as possible. We encourage people to stay in touch with our www.electroniciraq.net website. Archives at e-iraq and at the iraqpeaceteam.org website contain diary entries from Iraq Peace Team members who were on the ground during the U.S. invasion and occupation. Many of the responses we heard immediately following the U.S. occupation could be summed up in the wry comment of an Iraq friend who said perhaps Iraqis were only liberated from the notion that the U.S. ever wanted to save them in the first place.

Several reporters reliably write stirring accounts from Baghdad which unfold harsh realities endured by Iraqis under occupation. Robert Fisk (*Independent*) and Phil Reeves (*The Guardian*), both from the U.K., file regular articles that generally appear on the www.antiwar.com website and the www.commondreams.org website.

It’s crucial that we maintain the grassroots networks that developed before and during the war. Teach-ins, speaking engagements, letters to the editor, visits to elected representatives, and outreach to people in our communities who might be undecided and/or confused about U.S. war-making are among the actions we can undertake in the near future.

Do you believe that if George Bush were not re-elected in 2004, the foreign policies would change or is this just a natural extension of corporate-led globalization?

Corporate-led globalization policies have been promoted by U.S. administrations ever since 1945 when a small group of powerful people ushered us into the atomic age by dropping atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This is the same small group that led us into war with Korea, that killed 2 million Vietnamese people—people who never wanted to attack

the U.S. public. This same group slaughtered many thousands in U.S.-sponsored military and paramilitary attacks against Central Americans. This group took us into attacks against Serbia, Sudan and Afghanistan. It’s this group that causes continued affliction in Afghanistan where families suffer homelessness and disease in the aftermath of massive U.S. attacks following 9/11. And now, people in Iraq puzzle in agony over how to adjust to life under occupation following three weeks of intense bombardment. President Bush tried to convince the U.S. public that everything has changed since 9/11. Things should change, but they haven’t. We should try to dislodge President Bush and his cabal from the White House, but we must never be fooled into thinking that this would cure us of the terrible illness that sickens the corporate-led globalization campaigns. It’s a sickness caused by short-sighted greed and stubborn refusal to recognize basic rights of people and beings on this planet.

What have been the successes of VitW and other humanitarian campaigns in Iraq in the past five years and during the war?

Voices in the Wilderness served as a magnet, in the initial years of our campaign, to bring larger, more effective organizations into active nonviolent resistance to the economic sanctions. Our delegations helped dramatize a challenge to U.S. policy. Upon return, delegation members “hit the ground running” with widespread efforts to educate people about the misery and death caused by brutal economic sanctions. Together, a growing network educated massive numbers of people about the history of U.S. policies toward Iraq. Even the U.S. State Department admitted that “the battle for public opinion” had been lost in regard to U.S. justification for sanctions which had been labeled genocidal by Denis Halliday and Hans von Sponeck.

Although our collective efforts didn’t prevent this most recent war, the antiwar movement globally came very close to the critical mass needed to stop a war before it starts. It’s possible that the war makers were forced to be more concerned about civilian suffering and death because the U.S. public, and international opinion, would pay attention to U.S. violations of human rights.

It’s also possible that the antiwar network that grew so swiftly in advance of the war will be a base from which to build opposition to future war-making if the U.S. begins to design a new military campaign against one of the other “axis of evil” countries.

What should activists do to counter the massive propaganda campaigns in the U.S.?

We should counter the massive propaganda campaigns in the U.S. by continuing to direct our efforts “beneath the radar.” Major mainstream news organizations won’t be covering our efforts or presenting our ideas anytime soon. But smaller radio, TV and newspaper media are more likely to air and print our views and stories. By involving individuals and communities from all parts of the U.S. in our efforts, we’ve been able to generate local coverage of their activities. The Wheels of Justice bus tour, summer plans for creative witness in New York City, and formation of future delegations to visit Iraq will help Voices activists counter U.S. propaganda campaigns. In the fall, we should visit University and secondary school campuses as often as possible.

I don’t mean to underestimate the impact mainstream television coverage has on public opinion in the U.S. The majority of people in the U.S. learn about current events through television news.

Certainly we must do our best to cultivate contacts with mainstream journalists and news editors. The “further invention of nonviolence” requires finding creative and dynamic ways to reach the U.S. public—the civil rights movement gave stunning examples of creative, principled actions that eventually won over the major news media. It’s helpful to spend time examining campaigns that succeeded in educating masses of people through nonviolent resistance to injustices. The video *A Force More Powerful* presents six of those campaigns using actual footage from the efforts of Gandhi in South Africa and India, Lech Walensa in Poland, Danish struggles against Hitler, and the Nashville sit-ins under the guidance of Rev. James Lawson and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King.

In a “lull” between U.S. military campaigns, our efforts to educate ourselves and build growing networks remain crucial.

What were the primary objectives of Iraq Peace Team during the war? Do you feel IPT accomplished that goal?

IPT’s primary objective during the war was to be a voice for ordinary people whose cares and concerns are often eclipsed by mainstream media pre-occupation with reports from war makers.

For example, the Pentagon reports spoke about Iraqi troops that were “degraded.” This meant that the Iraqi troops were dismembered, mutilated, killed, even “pureed” by U.S. bombs. The term “degraded” gives a sanitized impression of bloodshed and slaughter.

We also aimed to bring a measure of comfort to people suffering under warfare, invasion and occupation.

Upon evaluation, we realize now that those of us ‘on the ground’ in Iraq should have worked harder to master use of camera equipment so that we could supply the Chicago office with more video footage. We did all that we could to write and send regular written reports. We might have been able to do more radio reports if we’d had access to a satellite phone. However, until the Iraqi regime crumbled we simply couldn’t use a satellite phone to receive or make calls.

We remained close to families and friends with whom we’ve had a long relationship in Baghdad. We were sadly cut off from contact with friends and families in Basra, but hopefully we can visit them in the near future.

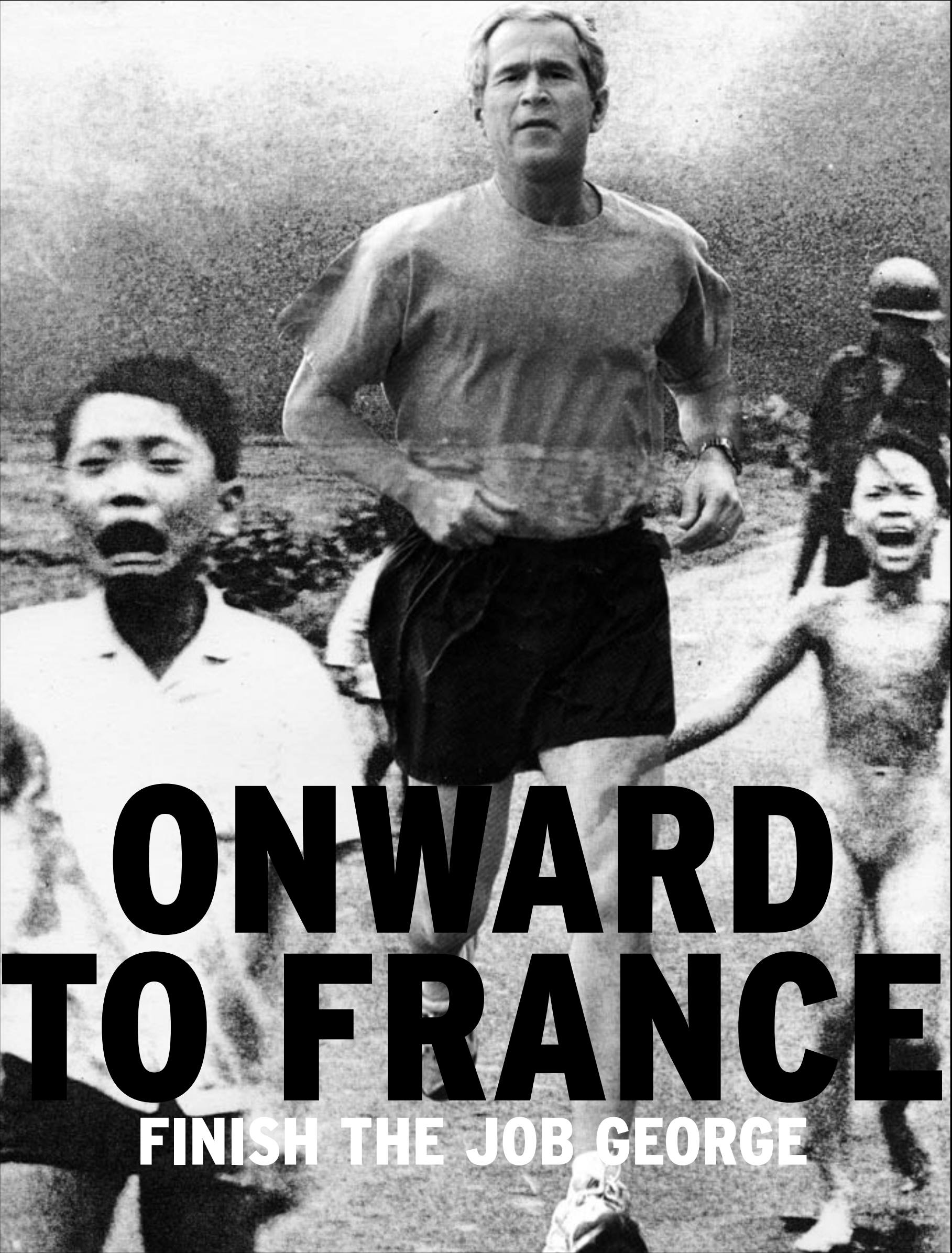
Do you feel that Voices has an obligation to broaden its mission beyond Iraq now that the national security strategy of the U.S. shows that Iraq is just one stepping stone in the path of an empire?

We won’t walk away from Iraqi friends, nor will we abandon cares and concerns of ordinary people there. And yet, as the U.S. continues to use terrorism as a smokescreen for U.S. assaults against other nations, we must continue attempts to stand alongside people who might be punished and killed by future U.S. attacks.

It looks like we have a lot of work ahead of us. I am feeling really overwhelmed.

David Dellinger ended his autobiography *From Yale to Jail* with an observation from a friend who, when told that what he envisioned would take 1,000 years to accomplish, responded, “That’s all the more reason to begin this afternoon.” **†**

Web links mentioned in this article:
WWW.ELECTRONICIRAQ.NET
WWW.IRAQPEACETEAM.ORG
WWW.VITW.ORG
WWW.ANTIWAR.COM
WWW.COMMONDREAMS.ORG



DJ DERRICK JENSEN

INTERVIEW BY SAM BAINE

Derrick Jensen is a long time environmental activist, author, beekeeper, and intellectual, now living in Crescent City, California. Mis book, *A Language Older Than Words*, has become a standard for environmentalists, anarchists, students, and folks from all walks of life for exploring the root problems of our damaged culture. In *Language*, Derrick connects intimate personal stories of family abuse and rape with the larger social and ecological disasters of our day. *A Culture of Make-Believe* was the follow-up. It explores in detail the roots and reasons of hate in our culture. Derrick also teaches creative writing in a super maximum security prison in California. Interview conducted by phone on the eve of the latest war on Iraq.

MediaReader: You’ve made it clear in your work that we live in the most destructive culture ever to exist. What about western civilization is so damaging? Who are the winners and losers in this culture? Who benefits and who suffers?

Derrick Jensen: I think when you are systematically dismantling the ecological infrastructure of the planet, nobody really wins. I think that there are some fiscal winners—certainly those at the center of empire, but it depends on how you define who wins. Certainly everybody loses—this is true on the most intimate familial level. 25% of all women in our culture are raped in their lifetime; another 19% fend off rape attempts. Do the perpetrators of those rapes “win”? It depends on your definition. When people have this entire system based on exploitation, within their own perceptual worldview, yes they are winning, but in terms of entering into a relationship, or even just surviving given the rates of cancer, nobody wins.

..then with so few, or really nobody benefiting from the way we live, how does this culture sustain itself?

One of the ways the culture perpetuates itself is that we’ve all been so traumatized that we forget what it’s like to be in mutual, functioning relationships with each other and with the natural world. So we’ve changed what it means to be in a relationship and we’ve divorced ourselves from the land. Judith Herman defines something called complex post-traumatic stress disorder—if you’ve been traumatized once, you might have PTSD. and that might be where you have flashbacks to that specific trauma. Judith Herman asks what happens if you are raised, or kept for years in captivity? Or raised in domestic violence, a family system where you are consistently terrorized? One thing that happens is that you feel the need to control your surroundings because everything is so scary. You can’t open up to entering into fully mutual relationships...you don’t even believe they are possible. So, part of the way the culture perpetuates itself is by traumatizing more and more people and making people terrified of relating to their surroundings in an open and loving way.

Could you then compare this way of living and this trauma to another, non-destructive way of living?

Well, we know that prior to contact with civilization, the Okanagans had no word in their language for child abuse. They did have a word for violation of a woman and what that word literally means is “some-

one looked at me in a way I don’t like”. This isn’t a romantic notion of noble savages or anything. This is both contemporary anthropology and explorers’ early accounts of running into Indians. Not just Indians but indigenous people everywhere. When Columbus first got to the so-called new world, he wrote some wonderful bits about how peaceful and happy the people here were, how when he handed them swords they grabbed the wrong end and cut themselves. The Indians of North America didn’t use rape as a tool of war until they were taught to do so by the whites. Not every indigenous culture has been peaceful but many have, and if some have, that means we all can. Further, even the ones who were warlike, none of them invented napalm. None of them approached the routine violence of this culture. It’s a really startling and extraordinary thing.

I want to ask you about the latest drive to war. Is there a desperation evident in the latest war, or is the system functioning like it always has? Is it even possible or realistic to expect our culture to continue without war?

It doesn’t seem to me like there is going to be a war. Because a war, to my mind, implies both sides are actually fighting. Is it going to be a mas-

sacre? Yes. But that’s what this culture specializes in. This culture is based on a rigidly defined but rarely articulated hierarchy in which violence from those higher on the hierarchy to those lower is most often either transparent or fully rationalized. Violence from those lower on the hierarchy to those higher is met with shock, horror, and the fetishization of the victim. That’s true on the personal level where within my family my father would beat people in my family with impunity but the one time my brother fought back he got beaten worse than ever. And it’s true on the social level where people get arrested for assaulting a police officer whenever they are beaten by cops. On the other hand, 4-6 Americans die every

day because they encounter police. The police are the most violent gang in the country, and yet that’s not noticeable.

These days, Bush and company are talking about the need to assassinate Saddam

Hussein, but if any head of state of any other country in the world said that about Bush, that country would be invaded within 48 hours. So it’s going to be a slaughter. This is what the culture is based on; this has been it from the beginning. Civilization originates in conquest abroad and repression at home. I don’t see any desperation in this, I don’t think it’s any different than Nazi Germany invading Czechoslovakia or Poland, or the United States invading...take your pick.

...500 years of invasions...

Yeah. I don’t see it as much different. It’s the same old story, and once sufficient numbers of brown people are dead and their resources have been taken over, then we can get back to important things like the NCAA tournament. I think Bush is a bit more stupid than most, and that manifests in his rhetoric being a bit more direct than most—Clinton continued to bomb Iraq, but he spoke of people’s pain as he committed the atrocities. Bush reminds me quite a lot of Stalin—just direct force.

Bush and company are talking about the need to assassinate Saddam Hussein, but if any head of state of any other country in the world said that about Bush, that country would be invaded within 48 hours.

In Northeastern California, near Mount Shasta, there is a sacred site to the Shasta and Modoc people, among others, called Medicine Lake. It is an exploded volcano; it was once the biggest in the Cascade range. Calpine Corporation, subsidized by millions of dollars of public money, has received approval from the Bush administration to develop geothermal power on the land—this is like burning the Vatican for power. How does the culture continue to justify destroying sacred sites? How can we pull down thousand-year old trees? What are the justifications for these everyday atrocities?

Well, its justifications are all over the map and they pretty much boil down to production being the god of the culture. Production is more important than anything. Whether it’s justifications for building a telescope on Mt. Graham, whether it’s justifications for clearcutting, justifications for killing bison, it doesn’t matter, there will be as many justifications as there are places. The fact that the justifications are stupid and patently untrue doesn’t matter—for example the whole spotted owl vs. jobs was a myth. Throughout the 80’s, the cuts went up, but the jobs went down because of automation and raw log exports. Or Remedy (a tree-sitter in the ancient redwoods of Northern California), being pulled out of the tree right now—the loggers have said that when they cut the tree it’s going to shatter, so they’re going to kill this tree not even to serve production. They’re going to get fucking zero out of this. And it doesn’t matter because the culture is driven by a death urge. The culture wants to destroy everything. Given its way, it won’t stop until there’s nothing left on the planet. But the planet won’t let that happen. The justifications are all over the map; they’re not even internally consistent, they’re all lies.

Talk to us about hope. Do you have hope?

No. I have no hope.

Why is that?

I ask people all over the country if they believe the culture is going to undergo a voluntary transformation to a sustainable way of living and nobody says yes. Nobody. One of the smartest things the Nazis did was to co-op rationality—that is to co-op hope. They did that by making the Jews believe every step of the way

that they had something to lose. Would you rather get an ID card or would you rather resist and possibly get killed? Would you rather go to a ghetto or would you rather resist and possibly get killed? Would you rather get on a cattle car or would you rather resist and possibly get killed? Would you rather take a shower or would you rather resist and possibly get killed? Hope is one of the things that binds us to the system, especially false hopes. If we just ask nicely enough, Weyerhaeuser will stop deforesting. If we just get out on the streets and march, those in power will finally, this one time, listen and do what we say. If we just speak truth to power that will do good. We have a deal with those in power—we can speak our truth to them, and then they listen to us, and then they ignore us. And then we all feel good because we’ve done something about it. We stood up and said what we believe. Well big fucking deal. Did it save any salmon? I don’t think so.

We environmentalists talk about the earth being a sentient being, but we don’t give it any credit for being smart. I read *1984* a little while ago and Orwell

to go extinct, I will not allow the dominant culture to drive coho salmon to go extinct. That’s not going to happen. There’s a difference between hope and making it happen.

So you don’t have false hope. But that doesn’t prevent you from fighting, because you have that love. So where do you fight? Are there weak spots? Are there cracks in the empire? Are there places that you think are most effective? When you want to save the salmon, what do you do?

I think the truth is very simple, but we just don’t talk about it, because we’re too scared. The entire civilizational infrastructure needs to go. I mean this on the psychological level—all my Indian friends say the first thing we need to do is decolonize our minds. To recognize that progress is another word for destructiveness. That production really equals the conversion of the living to the dead. That globalization is really about genocide. That’s the first thing. As a writer, that’s mainly where I go. But most of us stop there. There’s a great line from Lucy Parsons, whose husband was murdered by the state as one of the Haymarket martyrs, who said “never be deceived

that the rich will allow you to vote away their wealth.” The thing I’m really interested in is figuring out how we can deprive the enslavers of the ability to enslave. I’m writing a book on that right now and I don’t have an answer because I haven’t gotten there yet. I don’t think there’s a single answer. Like I said, we’re not going to stop it but we can push at the right time and help the natural world out. The natural world is really smart, and it knows the only way to get rid of this horrible culture is to take the salmon away, to change the climate, and do all these other things that are going to make the culture fall. But I’m absolutely not saying that we should sit back and let environmental degradation happen or further it ourselves...

But it seems that the natural world is fighting back—with mother bears charging freight trains to defend her cubs, rampaging elephants escaping from the circus, and the like.

The natural world has been way too patient.

To finish up, I want to ask you a question that you asked Native American author Vine Deloria in an interview that was reprinted in *Green Anarchy* #11. It reads simply, “what are some better ways of perceiving and living in the world?”

Some kid asked me on the east coast when I was on tour—a ninth grader I believe—he said “have you ever been in love?” I said “every day”. It’s a wonderful thing to fall in love with the place that you live. And to fall in love with these particular trees, these particular bees, these particular tadpoles. It’s a wonderful thing. To pay attention to your neighbors, to get to know them, and to allow them to get to know you, not in any scientific sense where you go out and catch them, but instead on their own terms. We’re all slaves now—one of the reasons we don’t take down the system is because we’re afraid of the consequences. I work in a super maximum security prison and I know what life is like for the people in there. I know what the dominant culture does to those who really resist. It’s really scary. At the end of my life, I want to be able to say I did everything I could and I gave everything I had. That with every cell in my body I opposed this system. We need to bring this thing down. We need to stop it. That’s another better way to be. Because we’re in a hell of a fix. **†**

Jessica Hopper

Interview by Al Burian

I had a feeling

I would get along with Jessica Hopper. She makes an impression:



whether through her business, Hopper PR (a public relations company she started out of high school and from which she's been supporting herself since), her very funny and acerbic music zine *Hit It or Quit It*, columns in *Punk Planet* magazine, rocking the party as a DJ or clearing rooms with confrontational laptop noise performances, she has a knack for finding the public eye. I like people who demand attention, generally, but even more so, I like people whose public personas seem to become a conduit for intense negative feeling and hostile scrutiny. You figure they must be doing something right to generate such outrage; at the very least they're going to be interesting. Hopper is a figure of controversy in many sectors of the hipster intelligensia, from punk purists questioning her ethics to Wicker Park indie-dudes recounting their personal anecdotes of getting their balls busted by her at a party. She appears as a peripheral character in various books on the recent history of alternative music, such as Mark Anderson's *Dance of Days* (where she is portrayed as the gentrifier of riot grrl), and more recently in

Charles Cross' biography of Kurt Cobain, where she appears only to throw up on Cobain's lawn. As a professional public relator, you'd think she would have a better public image, but in fact Hopper seems to have little concern for propriety and social tact. She's a woman with a big mouth. Not a popular thing to be, particularly in the Midwest, and perhaps not a strategic thing to be in her line of work. But this makes her lack of reserve all the more admirable. The following interview was conducted in late May 2003.

MediaReader: Why do you see women in administrative positions in the "alternative" music industry so much more than....

Jessica Hopper: Why do you see them being booking agents and doing PR but not being in the bands?

Yeah. Um...I think a lot of it is how we're socialized. It's an entry into the club-house; you get some power or authority but it has to be guised in service to the scene, or the boy-in-band ego. You're allowed that because it appears that you're not entirely self-serving or motivated for yourself. You're socialized into a caregiver role. A lot of the women that I know and work with, that's not to write off what they do, but publicity is a huge female ghetto. There's very few male publicists. There's more now than there used to be, but...most writers are male. If someone's calling to ask you a favor, it goes over a lot better if it's some nice girl asking you rather than some dude that's bro-ing down. There's a lot of female booking agents, and I don't know how it operates on that level. But publicity, that's how I've always felt, it's a female ghetto. Women are more socialized to take care of other's needs. That's why women make good booking agents, or good nurses.

So, as a self-defined feminist, what makes it worthwhile to participate in that sort of thing?

I ask myself that question a lot. When I first started doing business, Kim Colleta (Jawbox, Desoto records) would remind me all the

time to try to encourage other strong women to stay involved in music, not even to get people involved but to get people to stay involved. She would say, it makes it easier for all of us if there's a climate of...not even necessarily aggressive women, but...just women contributing to things and being in charge of things. That's the only way things are going to change. Through examples. Through having a community to network within. There's a lot of reasons why it's good.

But at the same time, sometimes girls e-mail me and go, "I want to get involved, I want to work with music, I just want to help bands out," and they seem pretty bright, and I tell them they're probably better suited elsewhere. Music work is often fruitless, I think working with music in general is pretty thankless. I don't want to see girls wasting away somewhere where they're not going to be appreciated. And, yeah, that's probably going to happen in any line of work, but you might as well get paid better (laughs). Sometimes I think, "encourage women, more women,

ground that's cohesive, and separate enough, and unwilling to go over to that side of the fence, willing to maintain its separateness.

I have a lot of conflicting feelings. I think in some ways, publicity is bad. Just in general. Whether it's bad for punk rock, or bad for the world, or bad for America or bad for people reading magazines. It's no worse for punk rock than it is for anything else.

In Mark Anderson's book about the DC punk scene, *Dance of Days*, in the chapter on riot grrl, you appear in somewhat of a villainous role. Other people involved in that movement seemed to be trying to keep things out of the media spotlight, but you were giving interviews to *Newsweek* and *Seventeen* magazine.

Because there was no hierarchy, a lot of women (in Minneapolis) would say, "well, riot grrl DC says we should have a media black-out. That's what they're doing." And people would squabble about it, yes or no, and then someone would say, "well, we need to issue a manifesto and send it to all the local papers."

"It makes it easier for all of us if there's a climate of...not even necessarily aggressive women, but...just women contributing to things and being in charge of things." Jessica Hopper

more women make more women want to be here, it makes it a better place for everyone." A few years ago it seemed like a lot more women were in bands. Now it doesn't seem like it so much.

Is it Emo's fault?

When I got into punk rock there was music that was political and music that was apolitical—or, maybe just more obtuse. But even the more obtuse bands, they'd play benefits, it just seems like the politics were more part and parcel of things. And even bands writing love songs, it wasn't like... There's a few factors in Emo that make it particularly negating. Emo is dudes making music for other dudes. Women aren't part of the story unless we intersect with the boy life somehow.

Do you think publicity is good for punk?

I can only...for me, the reason that I started doing PR and making it affordable for these little bands that otherwise couldn't have it is because, when I first started doing it ten years ago, most bands really didn't have publicists and it was really difficult to tour sometimes. For a little band, it's always going to be shitty. But even mid-size bands, people didn't know they were coming to town, people didn't know they were putting out records, even people who were totally tapped into the underground didn't know. I'd have 250 fanzines in a database. It was totally different then. I felt like I was helping bands to have longevity. When I first started doing PR when I was sixteen years old, I thought it was a noble cause (laughs). Probably up until twenty-one, I thought I was doing the right thing. I was being of service to my community!

Things just sort of changed. Publicity became a thing that everyone needs to have. Now everyone's got a publicist. And it has changed things. There's a lot less underground media now. I don't know if I can say whether it's good or bad for punk rock. I don't think punk is separate enough, or truly defined as the "other," like it used to be, enough that something could impact it as good or bad. Especially right now, with this boom of the underground seeming commercially viable. There's not enough of an under-

I felt like I had a better understanding because my parents worked in the media—you know, if you send a manifesto to a daily paper they're not going to print it for you. That's really unrealistic.

But was the question how to approach the media or whether to approach the media at all?

Both. Both. And the argument very quickly became—I had been trying to start riot grrl Minneapolis stuff, and some other people had found a place to have meetings, and we'd had two or three, and it was really fun and inspiring, but some of it was really trivial. I felt like there was a lot of squabbling over particulars. There was an article in *City Pages* written by a woman named Terri Sutton...

What's *City Pages*?

It's like the local Minneapolis weekly. It was the week I started 11th grade, maybe? It was about *Hit It Or Quit It*, and not really even about riot grrl specifically, but just that was some of the stuff that was showing up in the zine, and here's kind of what riot grrl is about, here's some bands associated with it. People were sort of starting to talk about it, there had been a riot grrl convention that summer, and it was starting to have some media presence. At the end of the *City Pages* article it said the address and time



for riot grrl meetings. And the week after that printed four or five girls showed up, not punk girls, just normal girls. At that meeting I was super attacked by girls who had been regularly attending for the last few months. People were saying, "Well, we don't want Pearl Jam girls showing up." This was at the time of a lot of underground co-option, Nirvana, etc. People really wanted to keep it closed. So there was more squabbling, and my whole thing was, "aren't all women valuable? Girls who listen to Pearl Jam get harassed in high school too. Uncool girls who work at the mall at the earring store get raped too." Some of the things that we were discussing and talking about, hoping to be a haven for, and to encourage inclusion and cohesiveness in a community of women—it's like, shouldn't that community be there for anybody who feels moved to seek it? That was my thinking about it.

But I do think it's regrettable; how that impacted people in a way that they didn't really have a choice about. I now look at it like you have your *MRR* or

Heartattack argument, that, say, some of the bands that came out of Gilman Street, who signed to major labels sold an inroad into a community which wasn't theirs to sell. Which I agree with to a certain extent, but also at the same time, bands are bands. Commerce is commerce.

Well, the difference is that the inroad was to a set of ideas. And once it was visible, it became something that was being debated and attacked, and obviously to a certain extent it will be distorted by media. But you look back at the *Newsweek* article, and it was dead on. The woman who did it, Farai Chideyea, she's an award-winning activist-journalist, she was the first black news analyst on CNN, and she had the same idea that I did, which was that girls need to know, girls need to have this door opened to them.

Why do you think you're seeing less women in bands lately?

I think part of it, for me, I never thought of playing in a band until I saw other women doing it. It didn't seem like something...even though I had that interest, even though I loved music, it wasn't until I saw my friend Kristin, who played in Janitor Joe and later in Hole, or saw Babes in Toyland, that it clicked: "I can do this." I don't know. I think women starting bands, sadly enough, is still a sort of aggressive choice, an aggressive assertion of self, to decide "I'm going to express myself." Women aren't particularly encouraged to do that, still in this day and age, in punk rock, or the world as a whole. I think there's a lot of subtle ways that women are discouraged. In some ways, it's easier once you have a band, because it's noticeable. But it's not encouraged. I think it's hard enough to be a woman with big ideas in this world. It's hard to be a person with big ideas in this world, in general, but, you know, lots of times the ladies have it rougher. You have to be ready to fight for what you want to do, and that can be really tiring. It can be really scary. It still is for me. ♪

JOHN YATES

Interview by Vincent Chung

TRICKLEDOWNARTONOMICS

IN A TIME BEFORE ANY KID WITH A MACINTOSH WAS A GRAPHIC DESIGNER, JOHN YATES WAS ONE OF THE FEW WHO SPENT GRUELING HOURS TYPESETTING LYRICS, SCANNING VINTAGE IMAGES, AND PICKING THOSE PERFECT PANTONES.

BANDS LINED UP TO HAVE THEIR WORK “MANUFACTURED” BY THE GUY WHO DID THE DEAD KENNEDY’S SWAN SONG RELEASE, *Give Me Convenience, Or Give Me Death*. OR THE SAME HANDS WHO MADE LIFETIME LOOK LIKE THE HOUSEMARTINS AND THEN LATER, A BLUE NOTE RECORDING. OR THE SAME INDIVIDUAL WHO DID RECORDS FOR CLIENTS LIKE *Maximumrocknroll*, JAWBREAKER, NO MEANS NO, CRASS, AND JADE TREE RECORDS.

WHILE THE GRAPHIC DESIGNER’S ROLE AS THE TRANSLATOR TO THE CLIENT’S BECKONING IS MOSTLY APOLITICAL, IT HASN’T STOPPED YATES FROM EXPRESSING HIS OWN VIEWS THROUGH DISSENT-FUELED GRAPHIC HAVOC. BLUNT WITH ITS ATTACK, BITING WITH ITS SARCASM, AND BOLD WITH ITS AESTHETIC, YATES’ GRAPHICS CRITICIZE A PLETHORA OF ENEMIES: FROM CORPORATE AMERICA TO OUR CORRUPT GOVERNMENT, FROM THE VULGARITY OF VIOLENCE TO THE EXCESS OF CAPITALIST CONSUMPTION, AND FROM ARTIFACTS OF HITLER’S REGIME TO THE CURRENT BUSH ADMINISTRATION.

AND THIS WAS DECADES BEFORE *Adbusters* REVIVED THEIR *First Things First* MANIFESTO 2000 CAMPAIGN.

UNDER THE BRAND NAME STEALWORKS, HE’S PUBLISHED THE EPONYMOUS ANTHOLOGY, *September Commando*, AND THE NEWLY RELEASED *Controlled Flight Into Terrain*, ALL PUBLISHED UNDER AK PRESS.

HIS DEDICATION TO HIS WORK AND BELIEFS ARE NOTHING BUT INSPIRING—AN INFLUENCE ON GRAPHIC DESIGNERS THAT WANT TO BE HEARD. HIS VOICE MIGHT BE BARKING IN YOUR FACE, BUT IT’S SLY WITH WIT AND COMPASSION. IF YOU SMIRK WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS, YOU’VE FOUND AN ALLY. IF YOU’RE OFFENDED, THEN IT’S A WELL-MEANING MIDDLE FINGER.

GRANTED, YOU MIGHT KNOW THE NAME, BUT YOU WOULDN’T KNOW WHERE YOU HEARD IT FROM. CRUISE THE LINER NOTES OF SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE PUNK ROCK RECORDS—YOU MIGHT FIND ONE OF HIS MANY STEALWORKS SIGNATURES GRACING HIS OWN BLOOD, SWEAT, AND TEARS. CHECK OUT A LOCAL PROTEST (PARTICULARLY THE “LEFTY” KINDS), YOU MIGHT SEE THAT UBIQUITOUS BOLD, BLACK T-SHIRT THAT SAYS, “DEMOCRACY, WE DELIVER” WITH BOMBS REIGNING OVER THE SKIES. THAT’S A STEALWORKS ORIGINAL.

BORN IN 1965 IN LEEDS, ENGLAND, YATES GRADUATED FROM TWO PROGRAMS IN GRAPHIC DESIGN AND PHOTOGRAPHY. AFTER SWAPPING ART OVER THE MAIL WITH JELLO BIAFRA, HE LANDED THE JOB OF DESIGNING THE INSERT TO THE DEAD KENNEDY’S *Give Me Convenience or Give Me Death*, WHICH EVENTUALLY LED TO A JOB AT ALTERNATIVE TENTACLES’ SAN FRANCISCO OFFICE. DURING HIS TEN YEARS AT A.T., YATES ALSO RAN HIS OWN LABEL, ALLIED RECORDINGS, PUTTING OUT RECORDS BY BANDS SUCH AS FUEL, FRICTION, BUZZ*OVEN, AND NEUROSIS. NOW MORE VISIBLE AS A FREELANCE GRAPHIC DESIGNER FOR SUCH ESTABLISHMENTS AS AK PRESS AND THE G7 WELCOMING COMMITTEE, YATES CONTINUES STEALWORKS WHILE RESIDING IN THE BAY AREA WITH HIS SIGNIFICANT OTHER.

MediaReader: Would you consider yourself as a fine artist or a graphic designer? Or both? Or neither?

John Yates: A graphic designer. I attempt to “sell” ideas, so I work in the medium of the ad world. Is it art? At a stretch, but then again burnt toast is considered art in some circles, so why not? I don’t like to refer to myself as an artist, because what I do isn’t particularly art-like. I design messages, but not like Hallmark, although it’s the same approach, essentially.

So how do you feel when others peg you as an artist?

I don’t fight it! I guess considering oneself an artist (with a small ‘a’) takes more of an ego than I feel I possess. Essentially, I’m just more comfortable referring to myself as a designer than I am an artist. If someone makes that analogy, it’s flattering and I am very appreciative.

How did you land yourself into doing record design? Was it ever an initial goal of yours?

It was always a goal of mine. I was always artistically inclined, but I had no focus, no direction, no way of expressing what I was feeling. Aside from the music, it was the visual aesthetic that attracted me to punk. It provided the spark and the outlet I was looking for. After college I just pursued it doggedly, and eventually wrangled a “career” out of it.

What visual aesthetic are we talking about that attracted you to punk? Any specific graphic designers come to mind?

As a kid of 11, when *Never Mind The Bollocks* was in most record store windows, the outrageousness of it made everyone take notice. I had no idea who Jamie Reid was at the time, and only a vague knowledge of who the Sex Pistols were (though that had changed within a year), so I have to say I was attracted to it simply because I wasn’t supposed to be. Once I was entrenched in punk and discovered what else was out there, it was like a light going on in the dark. As I developed politically as well as culturally, I was drawn to bands that had something to say, visually or verbally. Growing up in England, that meant I gravitated toward Crass and anarcho punk. I was also a huge Discharge fan, then I discovered Dead Kennedys and others from across the pond. The most influential artists for me were Gee (Crass) and Winston (DKs). They taught me the power of image and word, and biting humor.

Explain your relationship with Jello Biafra and Alternative Tentacles.

Biafra is a friend and a former employer. I worked at Alternative Tentacles for close to 10 years, and it was the reason I relocated to the U.S. from the U.K. We collaborated on many projects together, me being responsible for realizing Biafra’s creative shenanigans. I no longer work at A.T., but I still maintain a close personal and working relationship with Biafra and the label. He was one of the biggest influences on my artistic life and he’s a genuinely gifted individual.

Do you do much freelance work? How do you go about filtering your clients—or do you not need to?

I don’t do nearly as much freelance work as I used to, and not all of that is through choice. These days

I tend to work with a very select group of folks on a regular basis, and then the occasional outsider here and there. I’d like to do more, but it seems there are so many more individuals that now do what was previously work done by very few. I did make a conscious decision a few years back to severely curtail the freelance workload, and I think I’m actually a lot happier these days for that choice.

How come you’re happier? You actually have time for yourself now?

I’m happier because I have what passes for a life these days. I love to work. I’ve never been unemployed at any point in my adult life. I loved what I was doing, and it got to the point that I wouldn’t refuse anything (within reason, I have standards), so I was working a day job (at A.T.) then getting home and spending the rest of the night working, too. I’d work until the wee hours and fall asleep, get up, do it all over again. It got the point where I really wasn’t enjoying what I was

was, so things going full circle like that are pretty fucking cool.

Resh’s name has made many appearances in the new anthology. He’s a well-known Chicago name, but what’s your connection with him? Is he a new collaborator?

He should be a well-known Chicago name, the guy’s a brilliant designer. I’ve known Jon since Allied co-released his band Spoke’s two anthologies, back in the mid-nineties. We’ve kept in sporadic touch ever since, maybe seeing each other a handful of times in years between, but have become great friends regardless. He’s a very talented designer, far more so than me. I asked him if he’d consider writing a small quotation for the new book, because I regarded him as a gifted individual whose work I admired and respected. He feels I was an influence on his work in some way, so it sort of came full circle. I was just humbled to have him write something so kind about my work.

Anyway, seizing the moment, I caught him while stinking drunk and signed him up to write an introduction, either to the revamped ‘Stealworks,’ or the next anthology. A brilliant move on my part.

Were there any other peers you respected a lot?

Peers I respected? Well, besides those mentioned (Gee and Winston), I wasn’t aware of too many at the time, though obvious standouts would be Jason Farrell, Winni Wintermeyer, and a few others I can’t presently recall.

This is your third anthology. Compositionally, why more of the same?

Because I feel my work is at a place that I am most comfortable with now. It’s a format that has developed over the course of the three book anthologies, and is still doing so, but in a much more subtle manner. I’m not bored with the way the work has developed, yet. That may change with the fourth collection, due out sometime

next year, but it’s hard to say. And then I actually enjoy the repetition of the style. It may be monotonous in design, but I don’t feel it is in substance. The latest book is by far the most cohesive and defined work I feel I’ve done.

The third anthology definitely carries more wit, well, a very cynical and sardonic wit. So, it’s not the format that’s developed but the kind of message you expressed? If I’m way off here, how has it progressed?

I like to think my work gets better each time, or at least that’s the objective at the project offset. As I’ve grown, I feel my work has, too. Like most things in life, it’s a learning curve, and if it wasn’t, what would be the point? Maybe the wit is more pointed, more direct. I’ve always been cynical, but I’ve always attempted to temper that with something positive. This collection really achieved what I wanted it to, at least for me. I was genuinely happy with everything about it, and that’s usually not the case. Maybe it’s because I’m at a much more content part of my life now, that the work reflects that somehow? I’m comfortable in life, and it felt very comfortable, very natural, assembling the pieces for the book this time around. It all came together and felt right. I’m extremely pleased with the results, and if that shows, then I’ve done something right.



doing. It was killing me, and was no barrel of laughs for those close to me. Finally, my longtime companion put it all in perspective for me. I stepped back, took a look at where I was at, and decided it was time for a change.

You make an interesting point about how punk graphic design seems to have been diluted—or more common—in recent years. Hell, Dave Laney [MR’s editor] and I are pretty much practicing graphic designers! I remember when I was first getting into punk, your name was everywhere, but then a lot of new names entered the realm. How do you feel about this “explosion” of sorts?

I don’t feel anything about it, really. It was inevitable that others would come along and do what I and a few others used to be known for. That’s the way life is. It’s all about renewal. It’s very humbling and gives your work some meaning when folks you’ve apparently influenced come of age, so-to-speak. A very good friend of mine, Jon Resh, who was in the old Gainesville band Spoke (and he wrote a great book about the experience, too), wrote a little quote for my new book that blew me away. He always says how much of an influence I was on him, but then I see the work he does these days and I couldn’t touch it with a 10-foot pole. He’s so much more talented than I ever

To back up to composition, it’s easy to draw similarities between you and Barbara Kruger. How do you feel you two are different?

Kruger is a popular established artist with an instantly recognizable style, extremely generous funding grants, high profile gallery shows, mainstream media articles, a scathing feminist viewpoint, who can afford a black plus spot color design aesthetic. I’m a somewhat established designer within a highly ghettoized subculture with a vaguely original style, zero funding grants, zero gallery shows, indie press articles, a shotgun viewpoint, who can barely afford the black and white he always works in. Aside from that, she’s brilliant and I muddle through.

Do you really feel that small?

I wasn’t aware I was saying I’m small, more that I understand all too well the vast differences between Kruger and myself. Another litmus test would be to ask her if she’s heard of me. I can guarantee the answer, and that’s fine. It’s not a pissing contest. I admire her work immensely. I’d kill to have a fraction of her talent, and her funding, for that matter. It’s pointless to deny there hasn’t been any Kruger influence on my work, but I like to think that these days maybe I’ve found what works best for me. I don’t think I’m capable of much of the subtlety and finesse that is reflected in her work, and perhaps some of my work is far more blunt and obnoxious than she would ever consider. That’s partly from a punk background, partly because the shortest route between two points is a straight line.

Is Allied completely dead?

As a dodo. However, the label’s debt is still very much active and I’m paying it off incrementally.

Ouch, that’s humbling! So maybe you do feel that small...

Not at all. I’m very tall to my son, and that’s about as much as I want out of life these days. The Allied debt is a reality, that’s why I said what I said. Do you have issues with size?

Don’t take this wrong, but “Stealworks” sometimes takes from the concept of taking familiar graphic images and then co-opting them for your own subversive means. Is this the goal? If so, what’s the intention behind it?

It’s hard to take the obvious in the wrong way, but I know what you mean. Yes, the basic premise for my work is the “liberation” of “found” images, then turning those images around, in meaning or purpose. The intent, if any, is to beg a different perspective. To ask a different question or make an alternate statement. It’s the idea that you can take just about any image on its own and it’s just an image. But by working with supplemental text you can wholly redefine the meaning to suit your needs. It’s co-opting standard advertising practices to sell back what we’ve already been sold.

It’s the same kind of argument a DJ would use for his artistic use of samples...

If you mean the comparison between my design approach and a DJ sampling material to create something new and, in effect, his or her own, then yes, that’s a great analogy. I sample images, try to put a new spin on them, if you will (to labor the DJ thing to death). I’m not a believer in public domain copyright. Although most of the images I use I attempt to cull from older, hopefully more obscure, sources, one assumes that the photographer was originally paid for the use of an image wherever it appears. It then enters the public realm. I expect that to happen with my own work, and it does. If I made a lot of money off what I do, I’d purchase rights. I don’t, so I can’t. It’s artistic economics. Trickle-down artonomics, if you will.

which was fair enough, considering you’re talking about entities such as Time Warner, etc. Personally? Nothing, yet.

How active are you in these days of political hostility? What projects are you working on?

Not as active as I should be, I admit. I haven’t fly-postered in years, which I really enjoyed, but I still produce shirt designs, postcards, things like that. Most recently I was committed to getting *Controlled Flight Into Terrain* finished and out, which was achieved in April. Aside from the book, I’m currently working on a revised and updated edition of *Stealworks*, the first book anthology. I’ve always hated the print job on it and when AK Press asked if they could reprint it, I said no. So, they suggested I recreate it, essentially, for the digital age and they’d print that version.

Which is what we’re going to do. All of the original pieces featured in *Stealworks* were created cut and paste fashion, so it’s a lot of work to scan in and clean them up, and then redesign the project. It will be nice to be able to acknowledge the book’s existence, though.

So it was the print job that did *Stealworks* in? Is the book technically out of print then? In its redesign, would you maintain the 8.5 x 11 format? I was a little taken aback by the new size, thinking, “Oh no, AK is skimping on the printing!”

Yes. The print job was pretty poor, plus back then they were working from half-toned velox originals, which isn’t ideal but was the way I did things back then. It’s been long out of print. The redesign would revert to the 5.5 x 8.5 format, as with the latest. The new format was my choice, and I have to say I think that’s a part of what makes the new one look more cohesive. I like that it’s compact,

broken down into chapters in a more defined manner, and printed beautifully. Another reason was I wanted to keep the cost down, yes. AK would have funded whatever I wanted format-wise, but I really wanted the pocket book. I love it and am converted.

In the introduction to your new anthology, you express concern—rather paranoia—of coming under “friendly fire” as an outspoken citizen. Do you fear for your life?

I believe I was talking metaphorically and playing with word plays, which I am wanting to do. I was attempting to make a general point about the atmosphere of dissent and debate as being viewed as unpatriotic, especially post-9/11. This country has seen (but not seen) an alarming erosion of civil rights in a very short space of time. Homeland insecurity is at alert level red. But, frighteningly, most seem unconcerned, because it’s been sold as a necessary evil in the war on terror. Have I personally experienced threats for comments I’ve made post-9/11 that question the country’s direction? Absolutely. Do I fear for my life? No. But I certainly fear for the quality of life in the Total Information Awareness age. As Heller wrote, “Just because I’m paranoid, doesn’t mean they’re not after me.” 📌

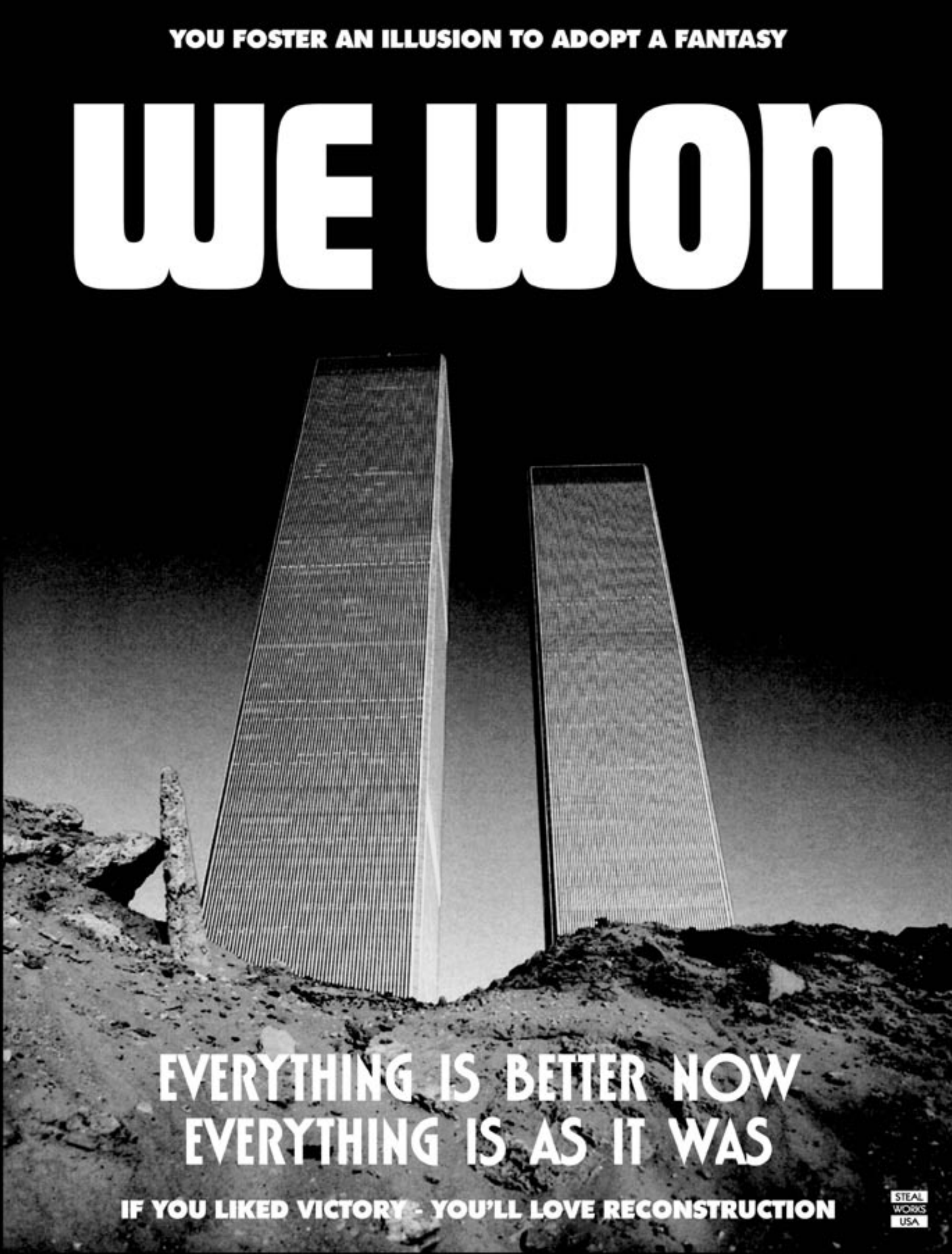


Earlier, you mentioned that you attempt to “sell” ideas, which is the technical role of a graphic designer. Obviously, working from a DIY punk ethic and using such tactics might seem like a paradox. Is it really? Do you feel like you have a strong concept of marketing and other such “corporate” tools? Do you even feel like those tools are even “corporate”?

I wouldn’t know if I possess a strong marketing concept. I suppose one might argue that if I did I would be a bit better known than I might be now, and I might be co-opted into selling revolution back to the kids, like some do. There’s nothing “corporate” about selling ideas. By the same token there’s nothing inherently wrong with being paid for services rendered. There’s a whole mess in between, but the two are not necessarily a part and parcel of the same thing. Che sold a revolution throughout the lower Americas, but I doubt you’d find any capitalist who’d consider him corporate, you know what I mean?

Also, do you ever run into any copyright or legal troubles because of your designs? An angry letter from a C.E.O.?

The only copyright issues I’ve ever run into were while at A.T., where we had to be somewhat more sensitive to such matters, given the label’s legal history. All were settled with standard cease and desist letters,





You've seen these cards on the nightly news. They've been featured in newspapers worldwide. Now you can own the one true collector's item from Operation Iraqi Freedom. This is the same 55-card deck given to Coalition soldiers featuring the Iraq's 52 "Most-Wanted" leaders.

(from an Ebay auction description)

DEATH CARD

Created by the Defense Intelligence Agency, the cards portraying 52 of the "most wanted" Iraqis made their first public appearance in the hands of Brigadier General Vincent Brooks at an April 11 CENTCOM briefing in Qatar. The deck he showed to the TV cameras was one of only 200 that had been printed at the DIA's in-house print shop. Since then they have become an almost daily fixture of news reports, as CENTCOM counts down each capture, from 52 to zero. As of this writing, 25 of the people shown on the cards have been captured by or turned themselves in to US/UK forces, and the DOD has requested an additional 1,700 decks to be printed.

Cards have a long history of symbolism in the Western world, from their more recent evocation of the Wild West to esoteric, occult and even Christian iconography. The current standard deck of playing cards probably dates from the 14th century, where one of the first recorded references appears in the books of Charles VI of France. Western cards were probably derived from a similar deck used by the Egyptian Mamelukes: 52 cards in 4 suits. The Mamelukes' cards in turn may have come from China.

The use of a deck of cards for intelligence, identification or intimidation purposes is not a new one in the US—World War II troops were issued decks of cards showing the profiles of Axis and Allied aircraft, and the Drug Enforcement Administration once distributed decks with pic-

tures of druglords. In the Vietnam War, Army and Marine Corps snipers left "death cards" on the bodies of slain Vietcong—an ace of spades with a skull and crossbones insignia and a warning message in Vietnamese. More recently the DC sniper left a death card near the scene of one shooting—an actual "death card" from a tarot deck with the handwritten message "I am God." The Iraq deck itself has been followed by a mob of imitators, with decks portraying the Bush Administration, War Profiteers, the Axis of Weasels and more.

A Defense Intelligence team at Bolling Air Force Base in Maryland started with a collection of almost 300 photographs of prominent Iraqis, narrowing it down to 39—13 cards have no photograph, just a generic silhouette. The cards portray Saddam Hussein as the ace of spades, with leading members of the military and the Baath party occupying the lower spots. Jokers list Iraqi military ranks and give a brief lesson on Iraqi titles and naming conventions.

The full list of wanted Iraqis contains far more than 52 names — one prominent name left out of the deck is that of Adil Salfeg Al-Azarui, a former intelligence chief. It seems obvious that the cards would have little non-entertainment utility in the hands of an individual soldier, but with them the military has struck a resonant chord with the news media and the public. Journalists have an easy hook on which to hang a story about the ongoing pursuit of the remaining members of Saddam Hussein's govern-

ment, and stateside cheerleaders for the war can feel like they're part of the action by playing a few hands of spades or poker with Hussein and company. One of the themes in the current US effort to lower expectations in the hunt for Weapons of Mass Destruction is the idea that it was the Iraqi regime itself that was a Weapon of Mass Destruction.

It's unclear whether the cards have actually been distributed to any soldiers in Iraq—in spite of the hundreds of Ebay sellers claiming to have cards "printed by the company who is shipping these to Kuwait," or that they're getting just a few decks from a buddy in the military. Instead of the cards, soldiers in Iraq have either a poster-style printout of the deck or a list of names.

Whatever their true purpose, the cards have been a rare success for U.S. intelligence, with the sale of millions of decks to eager consumers around the world. Thousands of fake decks have been sold online, with at least one of them changing hands on Ebay for more than \$2,000 in the week after they first appeared in the media. The United States Playing Card Co. of Cincinnati, Ohio hold a trademark for the Joker used in the Iraq decks—they have claimed exclusive rights to reproduce the cards and are preparing legal action against the numerous imitators. A week after the cards' introduction by the U.S. military, the Lake Forest, Illinois based website GreatUSAflags.com had sold 350,000 at \$5.95 each (one and a half times the price of a deck of Elvis playing cards, \$3.99).

-Ethan Clauaset



LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, ONCE AGAIN... PRESENTING THE LATEST IN BIASED REPORTING:

Reviewers VINCENT CHUNG, MELISSA GILES, PAUL JINKLING, DAVE LANEY

The Score

THE AGONY SCENE ★★★

S/T CD *Solid State Records*

Attention metal fans: this record shreds. Demonic sounding, pissed as fuck metal via In Flames and the Haunted. If you played those three bands in a row for your mother, she probably couldn't tell a difference between them. She would, however, cut your allowance and ban you from Metal Haven or whatever your local metal supply is. This is raging, borderline thrashmetal. Not that terrible shit that's crossover metal-hardcore (and for the record: metal-hardcore is the terrible contemporary of rap-metal. Metal's good; hardcore's good; rap's good; but any attempt to mix them should automatically buy you a one-way ticket to the northern reaches of Canada). The downfall of this disc is their weak attempt at covering the Stones' *Paint It Black*. For the sake of whatever it is you menacing Oklahomans believe in, why did you commit blasphemy? You knew you wouldn't have been able to do it, why did you try!? If you can overlook this one track of generic cover metal garbage, the disc rocks. Try it out metalhead.

DESIGN *Asterik Studio (design), Brian Meredith (photos)* ★ Why does every metal record make the band members look like they were buried alive for a week before being freshly raised out the ground for the photo shoot? Ideas? Well, another good job at a scary looking record. Unfortunately, "creepiness" was co-opted long ago and the people at record labels made template designs to create quick and easy professional-looking design. It's the "creepy" model, you know what I mean? Well, the Iron Maiden records were all killer looking, but they took a lot of work and originality. Even Sabbath had their own thing going on, and Cannibal Corpse for sure (I'm not saying for better or worse here), Judas Priest, Hawkwind, you name it... Well, this CD is fine. I don't feel like I got ripped off at the store, but you could trade it with any contemporary metal cover and not notice any difference. I say 1 star for metal being so stuck in it's terrible aesthetic. Here's a middle finger to that.

A LUNA RED ★★★

SLMZKI! CD *Action Driver*

Deconstructo dance-punk, not unlike Liars/Rapture/Faint, but not in an overdone or pretentious way. This band takes charge by playing a bit more experimentally, and luckily they're able to pull it off well. In addition to the typical rock band instrument setup, they utilize a shitload of sequencers, keyboards, samplers, and other noise making objects, and with all that they offer post-punk dance rhythms with a twist. Weird synthesized swirls are punctuated by bleeps and bleeps and bursts of noisy soundscapes; your monotonous hip-shakin' will turn into dance floor seizure armageddon.

DESIGN ★★★

Very cool and catchy. There is a style of cover art that seems to be used by only dance-oriented punk bands, and this fits right in. Think Faint's *Dance Macabre* and Sunshine's *Velvet Suicide*: black and red and white, a very clean cut and paste look, very stark and sharp. *MG*

AMORTIFERA ★★★

S/T EP *Staticult*

Two songs from this new band deliver what my friend calls "roots emo." That's a reference to when the bastardized word referred to UOA, Indian Summer, Angle Hair, Merel, Moss Icon and the like. This 7" is kind of a clunky version of that, but not necessarily in a bad way. You've got your talking and screaming over pounding instruments that occasionally take a break and give way to a clean progression. It's pretty cool and a refreshing disc to put on. If you're still a purist and loving any of the mentioned bands, check it out.

DESIGN ★★

A photocopy gone awry turned into a print job. Not the most compelling packaging, but rough and functional. It's a 7" after all. Right in line with Heroin's paper bag record.

ANCIENT GREEKS ★★★★★

THE SONG IS YOU *Flameshovel*

The angular, danceable pop structure of the music combined with the singsong, high-end vocals is unmistakably reminiscent of Ted Leo. Luckily, the comparison becomes less obvious as the record plays on. The Ancient Greeks play very gentle and sweet pop, using dubby, off kilter and sometimes quite funky guitar playing, breezy electronics, and unabashedly rhythmic bass and drum tempos. They move from quiet indiepop to dance-funk-punk in simple sweeps. Recommended for fans of Mr. Leo and Q and not U.

DESIGN *Andrew Rench* ★★★ Photos of store signs and street corners, blurred for effect, interlaid together in a somewhat jagged format. Not bad by any means, but not the most visually pleasing I've seen. *MG*

ARMOR FOR SLEEP ★★★

DREAM TO MAKE BELIEVE *Equal Vision*

There's been a trend of records like this coming in for review. And when I say *like this* I'm meaning *like Thursday*. I'm trying to be more fair about the reviews nowadays because it's apparently the new trend and magazines never want to overlook the next big thing, proving to the discriminating public that they're stuck in their ways, continuously griping about the times when music was good. And no, I don't feel like I've ever done that, but there is a certain sound that I just don't like, that I think is infusing the kids with bad taste, and I think that knockoffs of this sound are partially at fault for it, and I resent that. But realistically, that's just the way that things are, and I shouldn't resent it. That's what I'm aiming at. So, in conclusion to this unreview, the positive thing that I can say about this band is that they have a certain kick and musical prowess that their contemporaries do not have. And on the recording, they didn't make the same pseudo-overproduced vocal mistakes that most do (see Spitalfield review). This is the best CD of the style that came in, and we got a stack of them tiling the floor.

DESIGN *Chris Strong, Pam Piffard (band photo)* ★★★★★ Chris Strong has been responsible for some pretty cool stuff recently. The photos and colors

in this are really, umm, strong. Not sure what all the pictures of emptiness have to do with the music, but they're aesthetically pleasing. It looks like a Polyvinyl record but better. I wouldn't have thought it was a hard rock band by the cover, but I like that it wasn't the typical thing.

KRISTOFER ASTROM & HIDDEN TRUCK ★★★

PLASTERED CONFESSIONS *Revelation Records*

Revelation goes Scandinavian country rock! A nice surprise, actually—this album is a pleasant and well-rounded country folk, Ryan Adams-y, singer/songwriter endeavor complete with harmonica, banjo, mandolin and pedal steel guitar. Very gentle and down-home; also, very radio-friendly, but will still appeal to all the punk kids with country afflictions.

DESIGN ★★★ A mass of blue and red illustrations and cut-outs all sort of jumbled together over a white background. Elegant and creative, or choppy and directionless? A little bit of all that, I suppose. *MG*

AZITA ★★★

ENANTIODROMIA *Drag City*

Azita Youssefi (of Scissor Girls, Bride of No No, and AZ) brings us a solo album featuring the help of John McEntire, Matthew Lux, Rob Mazurek, and Jeff Parker. The album floats through jazz-inspired piano lines (Azita) to lightly scattered textured rock. You quickly develop a love it or hate it relationship with her voice, but I find it intriguing and gravitational, pushing you through song by song. Though musically dissimilar, Tom Waits comes to mind as a contemporary as I see a correlation between the two approaches to song writing and musicianship. Overall a compelling solo album.

DESIGN ★★★

Pictures of Azita and the lyrics wrapped in a digipack. Not spectacular, but the formal approach lends the package an air of integrity. We all still trust packaging, right?

BEAUTY PILL ★★★★★

YOU ARE RIGHT TO BE AFRAID *Dischord*

They're back with their second EP! I do wish this was a full-length, but there are rumors of that coming out soon, along with a tour from the long sleeping Beauty Pill. The four new songs keep true to the ideas of their first EP, delivering quirky pop that focuses on the interplay of male and female vocals that compliment each other perfectly. The music is dark and cynical while still being pop and encouraging. Brilliant description, yea? Well, they aren't dogmatic, they just write weird as shit lyrics about weirdo things that sink their hooks into you. It's killer. I await the LP.

DESIGN

Ryan Nelson (Art), Erik Denno (Layout) ★★★ It's like the Jetsons in blue or something. A little futuristic but in a 70s image of the future type of way. It's probably just from the font. It works. It's not a jewel case, just a little cardboard type of thing. Kinda throwaway unfortunately. Honestly, you can't read the spine because it doesn't have one, and once you accumulate about 60 of these

things you stop listening to them altogether because you can never find the CD that you want to hear. Call it lazy if you want, but it's reality. Put it in a jewel case next time or be damned.

BEDFORD ★★

SPACESHIPS, SEX AND JEALOUSY

Microcosm Publishing / Boss Tuneage

This is a compilation of all Bedford's singles from the latter half of the nineties. 25 songs of fast, typical pop punk in the vain of early Screeching Weasel, Bollweevils, Queers, etc. I would've loved this band during my teen years, but the pop punk thing just doesn't do it for me anymore.

DESIGN

Christopher Sleboda ★★ Wood-floor paneling background with cute, black and pink computer generated, pixilated silhouette images scattered throughout. It looks like too much yet not enough is going on all at the same time. Cute, though. *MG*

JELLO BIAFRA ★★★★★

MACHINE GUN IN THE CLOWN'S HAND

Alternative Tentacles / AK Press

To begin morbidly, it is going to be a sad fucking day when this guy dies. Who could possibly fill his shoes? Who is going to step up? Who has the credentials to step up? He is one of the pilings of punk rock, and when I read his obituary some gloomy day over a cup of coffee, leaning into my computer attempting to compile this hellrag of a magazine, well that's when my skyline will turn a darker hue of black. New colors will be invented for this storm. This man is an inspiration to me because he will not stop. He will not shut up. It brings to mind a line my friend once sang: "I talk because I'm scared of what you're thinking. I'm just filling space inside your head." I've seen Jello speak and occasionally wondered what he was getting at. With improv-esque chant-along songs like "Green Wedge" I momentarily thought that he was trying to fill the space inside my head with rhetorical babble. And to some extent it's true, but on another level, no one tries to fill the space in your head with more space. Lefty talkers are attempting to counter the sleeping and reinforced desire steering you to wade to the middle of the road. You talk to convince yourself. And once you're convinced, you talk to convince the others. Sometimes it's because you actually have the moral high ground and sometimes it's out of fear of loneliness that will make you perpetually uncomfortable. And most of the time, it's out of a combination of the two, and that's why I love these people that won't shut up. Because they won't accept your acceptance of mediocrity, and they will keep reminding you that you should not accept it yourself. And this is the coolest thing in the world. This is punk rock. And yes, it is fascism if you turn it around, but you gotta decide what side you're sitting on. ¶ On his seventh, and best that I've heard, spoken word album, Jello attacks the Bush Reich in just about every way that it can be attacked. He delivers mind blowing facts and riddles off countless statistics that the status quo does not want you to hear. This is a more intense

IMPORTANT NOTE:



We *will not* review any CD sent to us without full retail packaging. We believe that the complete package is essential for a proper review of any artist and, most importantly, of the specific "work of the artist" that you are sending us. We see no separation between music and art and operate under the belief that music *is* art. We therefore review not only the music but also the design and contents of the record. We have an extremely limited amount of space to work with and, as such, review only full-length recordings, videos, books, and CD EPs containing four or more songs. We do not review zines, 7" singles, or label compilations composed of exclusively one label's bands. Please, for the sake of your own wallet and the postal employees that complain about our post box filling up too quickly, *STOP* sending in *ANYTHING* that does not meet this description. You are wasting your time and creating more waste at the local dump. For those brave souls who can read, send review submissions to: MEDIAREADER POST OFFICE BOX 220386 CHICAGO IL 60622 UNITED STATES

Michael Moore without the biting sarcasm or cinematographic aptitude. Three CDs of massive political attack, waged with facts that will blow your mind and hopefully inspire you to begin doing something positive to change the treachery that we currently have, steering, at the helm of the ship. Wind does not change the direction of things. Waves can.

DESIGN *Chuck Sperry, Chris Shaw, Biafra, John Yates* ★★★★★ You've got Osama Bin Laden on the cover, George W. on the back. Both are posing as Ronald McDonald. I had been wanting to make an Osama McLaden poster a few months ago, unknowing of this art. So let's congratulate both of ourselves and say *FUCKING BRILLIANT*.

BLUEBIRD ★

HOTBLOOD *Dim Mak*

LA rock. Pretty sucking. More rock than Foo Fighters without the borderline originality and catchy hooks. If you're a fan of new Jimmy Eat

World, this could be your new favorite underground band. Generic rock. The only thing I like is that guitars are mixed excessively loud.

DESIGN *Jasonic Storrs, Jason Farrell, Jim Brown, Bluebird* ★ Sometimes I wonder why MR reviews the design. Some CDs seem so exhausting to review. This one for instance. It's just a CD. Nothing special. Pretty bad cover art, decent inside. I'm a little disappointed because Jason Farrell usually does nice work. I imagine he was only punching the buttons on the computer for the band.

CEX ★★★

BEING RIDDEN / B.R. INSTRUMENTALS

Temporary Residence

If IDM were Intelligent Dance Music, then why are there rarely ever words? Don't tell me any bullshit about Boards of Canada's moody soundscapes being critiques on manifest destiny and NASA's quest for fucking Pluto, because it's not. While mindbending in aural quality, the ideas

are abstract—open to literal interpretation. This doesn't happen when Cex says "Middle finger to the indie rock singer / Middle finger to the wack MC / Middle finger to the uncreative underground / A sack of middle fingers to y'all on MTV" I'm pretty sure I know what he means and that's *FUCK YOU*. ¶ Cex's discordant electronic product lay the foundation of competent beats, but he's "dumbed down" his textures to springboard his vocal talents—making this the *whitest* hip-hop record I have ever heard. That's not a bad thing. The man has flow, humorous wit, and a bratty personality. Plus, he takes numerous knocks at emo, which is a pretty white thing to do. Apologetically introspective, he still attacks all that surrounds his world, whether he's Rjyan Kidwell or his Cex alter-ego. The skin toned schizophrenia only nods towards Eminem, but if Marshall Mathers connects with Aerosmith, than Rjyan drops Shudder to Think (Craig Werden supplies backing vocals on some of the tracks). ¶ The instrumentation

consists of acoustic guitar riffs, sampled beats, field recordings, and fragments of electronic sound, all blended together to a diverse composition. It's no mindblowing piece of work, but it might get your booty shakin'. So if his MC skills piss you off, then you might just want to stick with the instrumentals version.

DESIGN *Jeremy Devine, Katie Rose, Rjyan Kidwell* ★★★★★ There's an interesting concept with supplying the conventional record with the instrumental version. It's the same cover on both, but on the instrumental version, his mouth is duct taped—an effective gimmick that comments on his harsh critics. The interiors offer a hodge podge of scrapbook scribbles, as if Kidwell's journal were raided and scanned. Handwritten lyrics, album notations, abstract scribbles, and drawings of airplanes and bugs offer nice eye candy, but I'm still trying to connect the elements. I'm probably trying too hard, anyways. *VC*

NOAM CHOMSKY ★★★★★

THE NEW WAR ON TERRORISM: FACT AND FICTION

Alternative Tentacles / AK Press

Chomsky is back with another spoken word album, this time focusing on the question of what is terrorism, and posing solutions to reduce the levels of both fear and terrorism. Almost an hour of Chomsky's critique delivered one month after 9/11. It's the scholastic high quality that you've come to expect from the man who is basically the turn-to point for the American Left.

CROOKED FINGERS ★★★★★

RED DEVIL DAWN *Merge*

Eric Bachmann is a magician. His voice is detectable from apartments away while his band wizards up the foundation for alchemy. I was never a big fan of Archers of Loaf (his old band) until the title track from their last record. Crooked Fingers builds on the subtle intensity that album established with a different instrumental configuration, and it forges into a fresh direction that makes sense in his progression as a songwriter. They lay down track after track of timeless, heavy-souled songs that don't rock but get you rocking. Totally awesome.

DESIGN *Brian Causey, Cindy Jerrell (art)* ★★★★★ I love the cover. Simple abstract painting with dark earthy tones. But the thing that ties it into something different than the array of abstract indie covers tiling my floor is the bar across the bottom and the typeface on that bar. It looks like an old branding iron hit the CD cover and singed the name and title into the cover. Next to it is a faded pig, which adds to the definite southern intensity of the album. Couldn't really be better.

DARKEST HOUR ★★★★★

HIDDEN HANDS OF A SADIST NATION *Victory*

Still touting their title as the only good band on Victory, Darkest Hour return with another metal assault. Fucking nerds playing harmony black metal. It rules. This is the type of stuff that we here at the MR headquarters are into cranking to volume eleven (yes, fucking eleven) while we stuff envelopes and pound cups of coffee, discussing conspiracy theories on JFK, the Fireside Bowl, and our empty bank accounts.

DESIGN *Shelby Cinca, Vance Lessard (photos)* ★★★★★ Fine and simple and solid. Props to them for not putting a skull or lots of evil looking things on the cover (probably a bi-product of keeping the design work out of the hands of the Victory staff department). It looks like a city or oil well on fire. I'm going with the later, billing this as Darkest Hour's political protest against the US government's foreign policy and the ongoing war in the Middle East.

DEAD THINGS ★★★★★

...BECAUSE SOMETIMES YOU JUST WANT TO RIDE YOUR BIKE TO THE SHOW... *Slave*

Rising like an angel out of the long defunct Pink Collar Jobs, Lynn and Jason bless us with fifteen raging punk songs that showcase their now patented dueling vocals and straight-ahead charging guitar lines. The easy comparisons here are Blatz and Grimples, but this band is its own, and I'm happy that these two are still creating spazzy chaos. The name alludes to their often self-deprecating mental state. I can see them sitting around over a beer in rural NC, thinking of band names and delving into

the history of punk rock. One says, "You know. Nobody's gonna like us. Nobody likes punk rock anymore. I think it's dead." The other stands up, sticks up a middle finger and screams "DEAD THINGS." Fuck yea, brilliance. Well, I dig this record. It totally rules, and it ain't dead, it ain't dead. The lyrics keep getting better and better. Full of posi-inspirational anecdotes. This band allegedly toured the state on bicycles. That's what the people here at *MediaReader* try to encourage. Of course, and as usual, they did it and we didn't. Good suggestions don't get you very far with anything. Props to them.

DESIGN *Jason, John Rash, Erika, and many others* ★★★★★

Drawings of a bike posse of skeletons with spears and guitars, gliding over car graveyards. Two thumbs up.

DEL CIELO / SIN DESIRES MARIE ★★★

SPLIT 7" *Ed Walters Records*

Del Cielo play a sugary pop tune that is equal parts Velocity Girl and Sleater Kinney; lady fronted, jangly-guitared, vocal harmony goodness. Sin Desires Marie play a slow and bass-heavy, dissonant rock song with a lot of interesting vocal play. **DESIGN** ★★★★★

A heavy, textured paper stock sleeve with images of two 7" singles lassoed together printed on the cover, simple text layout and drawings inside. *MG*

DIVISION OF LAURA LEE ★★★★★

97-99 *Lovitt*

A collection of 12 early recordings including a bunch of 7"s, a comp song and the *At the Royal Club* CD. Some of the songs really sound too much like Drive Like Jehu, some take hints from Refused, and some start sounding like their own thing. It's edgy ballsy rock punk done well, even if it hints at other bands a little too much. Probably a good thing for anyone to get who's into the newer DLL stuff. This'll set ya straight.

DESIGN *Shelby Cinca* ★★★★★

I really dig the cover. Very simple silver on white. Eloquent and retrospective looking, if that's possible. I don't know. I wish the lyrics were in here.

DOGWOOD ★

SEISMIC *Tooth and Nail*

Can I rename this band? Eh Eh! I think I've got it: Good Religion. Yep, it's pretty much Bad Religion delivered through the mouths of outspoken religiosities without the hooks or witty prose. That totals up for a sum of sucking in my book.

DESIGN ★★★★★

Above average. Tight design and interesting concepts that aren't totally run of the mill, but aren't too mind blowing either. Cool though.

DROPDEAD / TOTALITAR ★★★

SPLIT EP *Prank Records*

Five songs from long-standing thrashcore masters Dropdead, three from long-standing Swedish thrashcore masters Totalitar. Loud, fast, heavy—what more can I say?

DESIGN ★★★★★

Skulls, skulls, and more skulls. Photos of skulls, skull graphics, all black and white, awesome layout. Very evil. *MG*

EL GUAP0 ★★★★★

FAKE FRENCH *Dischord*

Ummm. What the fuck happened to this band? This can't be the same El Guapo who released that other record from DC, can it? The last record was mediocre rock, kinda generic and mostly boring. Well something happened: political unrest, social turbulence, sleeping with a spoon in their hand. Whatever the change in climitization, El Guapo are ruling it on this record. Their vocals are super worked out and over the top interesting while the music bangs on behind them. There's been a trend of overall lyrical upping-the-ante with Dischord lately, stemming from Beauty Pill, Q and Not U, and now El Guapo. These bands are taking nods from each other while individually delivering albums that are distinctly their own. An extremely well done and very impressive record from this trio.

DESIGN ★★★★★

A mess of cut and paste chlosterfuck. Not my thing. Intensely busy with handwriting, scratch-off lettering, you name it, it's here. Oddly enough though, it's interesting.

MATT ELLIOTT ★★★★★

THE MESS WE MADE *Merge*

A sulking album confused by classical instrumentation fused with electronic dabbling. A strange combination of Black Heart Procession and Rachel's that creates a very dark and sullen neo-classical feel. The electronic parts don't do much for the record, but they rarely appear and aren't overbearing on the songs when they surface. The perfect record for getting bummed out in France and walking down a cobblestone alley dressed in a cape cupping a bottle of wine.

DESIGN *Matt Gettinger, Ben Mack, Matthew Cooper* ★★

Bad digital design ideas. Looks acceptable but not good. I'm not into the digital fusion anywhere on this record.

FIN FANG FOOM ★★

WITH THE GIFT COMES THE CURSE *Lovitt Records*

There's nothing wrong with slow indie rock, there's even some really rad stuff like Codeine.

And Fin Fang Foom is pretty good as far as slow indie rock goes. Unfortunately they have this fundamental problem of every song sounding the same. Sometimes you can talk about a band being consistent, but this really does just seem to be a lack of imagination. The recording is pretty mediocre too, the guitars quietly buzz like insects, think about a mosquito hovering around your ear, and the piano gets tedious fast.

DESIGN ★★

Umm, the picture of the tank is kind of cool. I guess? *PJ*

FOURTH ROTOR ★★★★★

SEIZE *Electric Noise Records*

One of the things I loved about The Minutemen is that it they were the essence of burly-ass punk. By burly I mean, out-in-the-woods wrestling bears, wearing flannel shirts because it's fucking cold, and throwing enormous tree trunks at your mortal enemies. But you have none, because under that

gruff exterior, you're a really nice, compassion-ate kind of person. This isn't a tough guy kind of masculinity. It's this Paul Bunyanesque quality that adds charm to bands such as Hot Water Music, Fuel, and Avail. ¶ Enter Fourth Rotor. Doug Ward fronts (with ax, vocals, and the occasional harmonica) this three piece outfit that carries a sound that could put hairs on your chest. Jacob Levee supplies the thumping bass and Mary A.K. (Kammy) Lee pounds thunderously on the skins. "Chupa Chumps" opens the record with a verse melody reminiscent of Jawbox's *Chinese Fork Tie* and then barrels through nine tracks of industrial strength rootsy punk that takes a nod towards the aforementioned Minutemen. Ward's voice growls melodically over a chunky and dense sound not unlike Grandma's vegetable soup. Hearty punk for the hard at heart. ¶ This CD includes various live footage mixed in with navy imagery and a whopping mpg of show flyers.

DESIGN *Unaccredited* ★★

What's more fitting for this band's sound than photographs of various industrial tools? All the tools are circular shaped to keep with the "rotor" theme: gauges, knobs, labels, and other round objects litter the layout. The thing is, the photographs are low contrast and then someone took the liberty to apply some heinous Photoshop filters on top. Had they stuck to clean, nicely contrasted photos, there could have been some promise for this layout. *VC*

FURTHERMORE ★

SHEANDI *Tooth and Nail*

A hip-hop duo on Tooth and Nail. Hmm. Well, this is basically funky, effects-ridden hip-hop kitsch. There are a few good points: interesting conglomeration of beats and samples with real instruments, nice bass lines, and an underlying thread of well-structured piano pieces. But the weak rhymes and vocals, sheer overproduction and overall cheesiness quickly overwhelm the good stuff.

DESIGN ★★★★★

White silhouette figures cut into a black background with this cool bubble effect going on. Nice use of stripes elsewhere. The fonts used throughout are difficult to read, especially the high-tech cursive lettering on the front and back covers. *MG*

GOSSIP ★★★★★

MOVEMENT *Kill Rock Stars*

Big smiles for this Olympian sophomore release. Musically similar to their debut full-length, but they step up the catchiness and lyrical content without "going" for the hooks. It's boils up to the perfect craft of song writing and delivers the goods times ten. Maybe the most important guitar-drums-vocals band alive today. Honestly, the band could be beating on cardboard boxes with cigarette lighters and I'd still buy the record to hear their singer belt out her amazingly developed Aretha type wails. Her voice is sick and your ears are the medicine. Recommended for all earth people.

DESIGN ★★★★★

They're sticking with their lo-fi garage rock aesthetics. It's cool and punk looking the way Wipers' and Dead Boys' records looked.

GRIMPLE ★★★★★

S/T DISCOGRAPHY *Prank*

Now I'm not 100% on this, but I'm almost positive that this is their discography. The CD is self-titled and contains the entire "Up Your Ass" LP as well as a 7" and some demos. Grimple were one of the most badass in-your-face straight up punk bands. Loud and snotty with positive lyrics. They really defined this sort of music and are the kings of it. The melodic, fast paced street kings. Be like Nolan and get their logo tattooed on you. It's worth it. **DESIGN** *Johnny Brito, Ken Sanderson, + 2* ★★★★★

You've got their logo (see the reference to tattooing this on your body above) and some street punk type art. Red, black, and white. Straight up Stickerguy.

HELICOPTER HELICOPTER ★★★★★

WILD DOGES WITH X-RAY EYES *Initial*

A moment of glory for the pop world. This band wraps up all the hooky pop joy of Weezer and the Pixies without the cheese that most bands unintentionally fuse as a by-product. Twelve upbeat hooky jams that made me play it again right as it finished. Almost reminds me of the faster Beauty Pill songs, probably because the male/female vocals fit so perfectly over the melodies.

DESIGN *Ryan Patterson* ★★

Boring methinks. Red, black and white with clip art and archaic computing.

THE INTIMA ★★★★★

PERIL & PANIC *Slowdance Records*

It's not until track 5 do I realize that my breathing pattern is erratic. Hyperventilating and fluttery, it's a nice elating high. As an asthmatic, this is normal—if I were in a smoky club or with my mouth over the exhaust pipe of Dad's '79 Nova. *Peril & Panic*, indeed. I thought it was my aging jadedness, but rarely have I heard music so gripping, so nervously demanding that the urgency hits the bloodstream like hard drugs through the jugular. ¶ Made up of bass, drums, guitar, and a violin, The Intima creates a cacophony of swirling, yet punchy noise backed by Eastern European melodic tendencies. One can't help but reference The Ex. ¶ Ok, let's talk about the violin here. Often an accent in the world of rock, the violin adds a novel foil to their electric riffage, which adds an element of tenderness. With The Intima, the violin leads when the vox drop out, played with screaming intensity. Nora lays those horsehairs thick on the string, creating a dirty sound. The intonation might be off a little (this could be on purpose), and there's occasional squeaks, but who cares when you're growling this much? ¶ The lyrics are anti-industry, covering mankind's excess (in development and consumption) over our delicate environment—hard subjects to tackle without coming off as contrived, but The Intima handles it. The explanations in the liner notes inform listeners that the muse comes from experience and not headlines off *The Nation*.

DESIGN *Craig Watkins, Lydia Doleman* ★★

Suffering from a muddled print job, the blacks and reds hardly dance and instead seep into each other to an almost unreadable mess. The cover is a drawing that renders poorly in the printing and I'm not quite sure how it relates to the band. I feel like music of this caliber should evoke more demanding imagery. There's just so much going on for such sterile and typical record design. There's elements of trees littered throughout and I wish that could have been taken a lot further. *VC*

JOAN OF ARC ★

IN RAPE FANTASY AND TERROR SEX WE TRUST

Perishable Records

This band has always fluctuated between a more cohesive sort-of-rock thing and an instrumental babbling under the influence of Protocols, the later often being confused as either Zappa-shock or pretentious art-fag drooling. Your first clue that this album is totally fucked up is the title, then it's the 14 airy tracks of creepiness that achieve their unlistenablilty through hard-panned instruments, multiple percussion, and Tim Kinsella's stream of consciousness circular rambling. This album was a collective effort between Joan of Arc and their alter-ego band Friend/Enemy, featuring a long list of other collaborators. I'm told it's a very political album, but no lyrics are printed and I've never been able to follow Kinsella's lyrics without reading them. The album crescendos with the title track, an electronic mind fuck of tribal drumming that leads way to Kinsella before it leads out the album with a long scary tone. Unfortunately, you want them to either bust into a Can style jam or focus on making the music creepier. Neither happens. As it is, the music sits as an awkward record on the shelf next to piles of other awkward 4 track tapes I have.

DESIGN *C. Strong, R. Yuen, T. Kinsella, S. Zurick* ★★★★★

Aside from a killer title, the only illustration on the record is a rainbow-flag type of graph with a heart-shaped US flag in opposite rainbow colors. Hand written across the flag is "in rape fantasy and terror sex we trust." These guys always have great covers. I suggest getting the poster, not the record.

JOAN OF ARSE ★★
DISTANT HEARTS, A LITTLE CLOSER *Flameshovel*
Well, first off: What in the fuck is up with your name? Did it slide by you that a fairly well known Chicago band is called Joan of Arc? It's like naming your band Iron Mason or the Minutemean or Bright Hi's. I mean, you didn't even go for the Helen of Troy approach which is a little more subtle. Well, if you can get past this name (obviously I'm doing a good job at it), you're left with spacious alt-country that sounds like it should be the soundtrack to a western themed *Gangs of New York*. Full of crescendos, those quiet sulking moments, and the running-away-from-the-bad-guy scenes. Sunsets too. They do those well.

DESIGN *La Mano 21* ★★ ★★
Quaint and subtle. It's your friend that doesn't want to be noticed but just can't help dressing nice. You wear the pink tanktop; he wears the charcoal turtleneck.

JUDAH JOHNSON ★★ ★★
KISSES AND INTERROGATION *Flameshovel*
Hot weather nap music. Sullen pop that will dig you into amazing dreams. What a surprise. Not receiving very high marks on their last record in the pages of this magazine, they've rattled the shell this time. Relatively derivative of Radiohead, Flaming Lips, and Jason Faulkner, JJ takes us on a pop journey through dreamland with pink elves winking at us shoreside while we float downstream. Very good record.
DESIGN *Aaron O* ★★ ★★
Double booklet style is a nice touch. Nice fonts and photos. That's pretty much all there is here.

THE KICKASS ★★ ★★
DEATHMETAL IS FOR PUSSIES *Bifocal*
At least this time the sticker on the shrinkwrap-ping makes the comparison, not me. Yep, "Fans of Breadwinner, The Fucking Champs, Don Caballero, Oxes: TAKE NOTE." And, aheem, they wear their influences on their sleeve. But that doesn't mean that this band can't give any of those bands (well, if you leave out Breadwinner) a run for their money. It's nerdy dude metal wanking, but good and aggressive. They need another guitar and more harmony parts. This type of music necessitates killer harmonies running all the time. They throw in trumpet every so often which doesn't offend me but doesn't do much either. If you like any of the bands they mentioned, you may have found yourself a new favorite band.
DESIGN *Charles Cardello* ★★ ★★
This photo shoot must have been fun as fuck. Tons of burly mandudes dressed in pink g-strings very close to each other. Mad props to the fashion designer. If you lived in Chicago, you could have charged \$10 entry to let people see this thing. Are those socks in their pants or am I insecure?

LADDIO BOLOCKO ★★ ★★ ★★
THE LIFE & TIMES OF LADDIO BOLOCKO
No Quarter Records
Laddio Bolocko! Laddio Bolocko! Laddio Bolocko! The way to remember names is through repetition right? Laddio Bolocko! Laddio Bolocko is the band you feel stupid about not knowing anything about in 1998. You wish they were still around. Laddio Bolocko is the band you wish you were in because Laddio Bolocko is the band that has all the elements of every single band you've ever loved. Laddio Bolocko! Hearing a recording like this always makes you happy to be alive because then you remember that at least with music anything is possible. Oh yeah, this double CD has a video of some live footage, so basically there's no reason not to get stoked about this release.

DESIGN ★★ ★★
Fold out booklet packaging is always nice for double CDs rather than the standard jewel case format, and the photography is top notch. The only thing is the music is so amazing I feel totally silly even thinking about the packaging. *PJ*

LEFTY'S DECEIVER ★★ ★★
CHEATS *My Pal God*
It took me a good four listens to realize what this band reminds me of. It was driving me crazy. It's upbeat (but not very driving) indie rock with semi-clean guitars and a high-pitched voice. It locks you in and you can't stop listening to it, even though you may not think it's the best thing in the world. But still, you continue to play it and listen attentively. Well, I've come to the diagnosis: it sounds like J Church. But I'd lay down my cards

on it being unintentional. While the singers have more than a thing a common, I would be surprised if these guys had even heard of J Church. And as further analysis, it sounds like J Church without the pissed off (though often ambiguous) political rage that drives Lance Hahn—which means that this is a more lax, middle of the road J Church. But still, it draws you in.
DESIGN *Andy Williams* ★
I really don't like the cover. And the front and back covers are essentially the same. It took me weeks to listen to this based on the cover. It kept getting pushed back to the bottom of the pile, and then the new bottom, and so on. I wish I would have listened to it earlier.

LOOSE FUR ★★ ★★
S/T Drag City
There are some records that I really like but can't describe. Not because they're totally unique or they're breaking sonic ground, but for some hazy

reason that always eludes me. Like walking into a record store and forgetting why it is that you entered. You leave figuring that your memory failed you on that account because it subconscious-ly remembered that your wallet was empty and it would therefore be, undeniably, a bad idea to buy anything. Memory doesn't forget, it just prioritizes. Well, for some reason that somehow may follow this system of logic, I'm digging this CD. The band was probably a studio project between Jim O'Rourke (Sonic Youth and tons of solo records), Jeff Tweedy (Wilco, Uncle Tupelo) and Glenn Kotche (Elliot Smith, Edith Frost and myriads more). Slow, laid-back and often twangy with tastefully repetitive guitar lines and sweet vocals. That's the best I can do for this hi-caliber release.
DESIGN *Brian Calvin* ★★ ★★
Great painting of ape man playing guitar in a dreamy landscape. Sticker functions well on the jewel case to show the name of the band. Actually, the sticker looks really cool. Good design move.

LYING IN STATES ★★ ★★
THE BEWILDERED HERD *Harmless Records*
Slow and sprawling indie rock with a big Radiohead influence. Soothing guitar interplay, some mathy and/or harder-edged interludes, a bit of sampling and synthetics, intense buildups leading to trickle-down melodies, etc. Just enough going on to chase away the typical (and boring) indie aesthetic. Nice work.
DESIGN ★★ ★★
Very cool—the front and back cover drawings remind me of a fucked up Ida Appleborg for some reason—kind of a mixed-media thing with an odd use of colors and juxtapositions. The rest of the layout consists of weird digitalized paintings. Fine by me. The font and text layout, though, doesn't fit with the artwork as well as it could. *MG*

MAJORITY RULE ★★ ★★ ★★
EMERGENCY NUMBERS *Magic Bullet Records*
When hardcore starts leaving a bad taste in your mouth because of its monotonous and redundant music, politics (or lack thereof), and overall *boyness*, this is the band to reaffirm your faith. Majority Rule, uh...rule. They play a brand of hardcore that's a conglomeration of all the different modern styles (metallic, screamo, chug, thrash), and it works so fucking well. The singers growl and scream their way through each song with passion and conviction instead of heavy machismo. Shit, there's even a fairly complex instrumental track that is as brutal as at is pretty. Nothing short of excellent.
DESIGN *Matt Michel* ★★ ★★
Awesome. Instead of a booklet, there are 6 unbound black cards, each with a politically minded and artfully taken photo on one side and song lyrics on the other (one card for each song with vocals, plus cover). *MG*

MAXIMILLIAN COLBY ★★ ★★ ★★
DISCOGRAPHY *Lovitt Records*
The mid-90s were kind to the NoVA scene. With local peers Action Patrol and Avail, Max Colby were part of one of the most exciting moments in Richmond's punk community. Despite their existence being a mere blip, their sound resonated loud enough to establish Max Colby as an influence for many bands to come. ¶ Maximillian Colby made their mark on me through my first punk rock mix tape. With *Last Name* bookmarking a place between Assfactor 4 and Heroin, the first note was an explosive punch to the face that faded off to calculated picking as precise as a sniper's crossfire. The band seamlessly connected their tense and nervous dance with explosive bursts of fury, driving every note home, which, unfortunately made Heroin pale in comparison. Such can be said about the rest of this band's catalog, with this CD providing a document to

Max Colby's articulate ability to control chaos. The band rocked its way onto my favorite bands in high school, providing a perfect complement as Sleepytime Trio—the new band to emerge from Max Colby's ashes—were getting their act together. ¶ With Lovitt handling the re-release of Whirled Records' discography of the band, they improved on the package, adding one song (*One Gallon Alda*) that was omitted from the first edition, reformatting the artwork to make the lyrics more understandable, and remastering the whole thing so even some of those demo tracks don't sound quite so bad. It's a vast improvement while much respect goes to Brian Lowit for keeping this title in print—for the band must live on.
DESIGN *Prof. Yaya* ★★ ★★
A huge improvement over the last design, Prof. Yaya gives Max Colby an updated, modernist design. White borders, san serif type, and abstract line art—you know, whatever Jason Gnewikow brought to Jade Tree that happened when Andy

Mueller dropped into indie rock. It's an improvement because you can actually read the lyrics, a task so arduous with the Whirled version that the lyrics became mythical for those unwilling to risk eyestrain to the 100th degree. Unfortunately, the design just doesn't exactly fit the band. The abstraction of an earlier design only made it cold and meaningless. It's a little disheartening when a designer's style overtakes the band's individuality. *VC*

MINOR THREAT ★★ ★
FIRST DEMO TAPE *Dischord*
I've never been to the Dischord house, but I have a fantasy of what it might look like inside: homey, stripped bare with hand me down couches (but nice ones), used mugs that have been there for months (perhaps the Lovitt Records thermos?), and just piles upon piles of archival junk scattered about. What I mean by archival junk is that underneath that couch cushion you're sitting on, well, you'll find a Jawbox *Grippe* test press. See that plastic box you're ashing in? Well, that's the DAT case to old State of Alert masters. The tape itself probably fell behind the television twenty years ago. Dischord exists to document the DC punk scene, but its output is namely whatever they *managed* to keep track of. They never told you about those Lungfish temporary tattoos that were supposed to come out with *Pass and Stow*, did they? Yeah, those are in a box with Iron Cross coloring books in the pantry. ¶ When Dischord was working on the *20 Years of Dischord* box set, they happened to come across Minor Threat's first demo, recorded three or four months after their conception. Unhappy with their first trip to the studio, this recording went unmixed and shelved, later to be kicked under the wicker loveseat Chad Clark wove as a gift. A month later these recordings were made: Minor Threat entered the studio again and re-recorded these songs, which were later released as their eponymous 7" EP. Now, the originals have been discovered in the backyard when Ian MacKaye was mowing the lawn. He and Don Zientara mixed the tape in 2001, twenty years after it was recorded. ¶ Minor Threat were right: the songs offer a lackluster performance, devoid of the fiery passion that fueled the recordings everyone knows and loves. It's a little disheartening, to say the least—like saying you saw Minor Threat and "caught them on a bad night." While it's not a terrible recording or poor performance, these songs don't shine as much as the "originals." I like it though. Had these upstaged the songs that I've known by heart from high school, I would have felt seriously duped. Let's hear it for Dischord and its commitment to standards.

DESIGN *Jeff Nelson, Ian MacKaye* ★★ ★★
You would think that you've seen all documentation of Minor Threat from digging through *Banned in DC*, right? Even *Dance of Days* would ensure the fact that all the early DC photos have been published and there are absolutely none left in existence. Wrong. Even with the redundancy of purchasing this piece of retrospective backpedaling, there are some of *THE BEST* Minor Threat photos included in this packaging. I'm all about the interior photos of the band goofing off in the studio, a side that was ever rarely shown. That and (contrary to my review's sarcasm, I'm not shitting you with this) a nicely sized photo of Henry Rollins in a dress and Minnie Mouse hat. *VC*

NAKATOMI PLAZA ★★ ★★
PRIVATE PROPERTY *Immigrant Sun*
Raw and driving political punk that brings to mind Yaphet Kotto, the Killing Tree, Braid, and Crimpshrine. It's diverse enough to keep you listening, and it's urgent enough to keep you attentive. One of the best punk albums to come in. It's relevant and contemporary but keeps true to the rawness and immediacy that is essential for an album like this. Killer.
DESIGN *Sean Mallinson* ★★
A landscape through a fence. Get it? *Private Property*. Not the most enticing packaging I could imagine, but it looks pretty cool. I think the band is better than their art.

NORTH ELEMENTARY ★★ ★
OUT OF PHASE *Sit and Spin*
Soothing indie rock with male/female vocals that dabbles with the electronic (tastefully) and calms a fevering mood. A slew of musicians add their sounds to make this cohesive album of fifteen

shortish songs that lullaby you without taking the life out of you. I've found it to be a good record to put on after a day fanaticizing about myself being totally broke. You should pick it up if you have any money, and try to get one for free if you don't. Probably good to make out to as well if you're the slow sensitive type.

DESIGN *Mother Productions* ★★

Quirky cartoonish drawings that were pumped into a computer and colored. I like the drawings, but not the font or inside of the booklet.

OMA YANG ★★

BANG BANG *Slowdance*

People make music like this because they are on downers. Shooting heroin, cooking morphine, sucking bong. Nobody on cocaine makes this. No lush makes this. It sure as hell isn't for the ADD infantry. But unlike the many bands that have made drugs alluring, romanticizing the underbelly of the seedy and discontent anti-ground that is historically responsible for producing the good music, Oma Yang make me embarrassed that I have ever had a good time on drugs. Like soberly walking into a bar at last call to grasp that leveling moment of clarity in which you finally attenuate that drunk people are not fun to be around unless you are one of the drunk. This is a masturbating stroke, an instrumental headache, another row of discs at the local record store that the clerks make way for by not re-stocking that Melvins record that I've been trying to find. And during the climax to this entire rave, we begin to lose concentration while the repetitive drones from reverberated guitars whine at us with a message that George W. has surreptitiously implanted beneath the banal tones of the band: *Do not do drugs. The war on terrorism is a war on drugs.*

DESIGN *Oma Yang, E. Caraeff, C. Kortman, OY* ★★★★★

This crew is better suited for design. An 8-panel booklet that blows the doors off most of the stuff I got. Strong photos that bring to mind Tibor Kilman and David Byrne. The only thing I'm wondering is what the "NT" on three of the panels means. And what's up with the underpants on the CD with "NT" coming out of them? Am I fucked up and what is really going on is that the name of the band is Oma Yang Bang Bang and the name of the album is "NY." You got me confused you crazy stoners.

OWEN ★★

NO GOOD FOR NO ONE NOW *Polyvinyl*

Seven new songs from Mike Kinsella show him moving in a slower heartfelt direction. Excuse the total sap rocker diction, but he manages to create a soft spoken, easy-listening bum-out record that focuses lyrically on relationships and spins off in a perfect way. I listened to it once and hit play again when it got to the end. Parts remind me of a slower, song-driven Joan of Arc while others remind me of an acoustic Dinosaur, Jr. or Elliot Smith. The tempo creeps along but draws you in to the textured acoustic guitar playing and lulling drums. Mike continues to play all the instruments on this one, which was recorded in his mom's house. It makes you wonder how many things one person can do giantly. Owen is the best thing going on Polyvinyl.

DESIGN *Chris Stong (layout), Charlotte Byi (painting)* ★★

Minimalist digipack with a reproduction of a painting that hung in his mom's house. It looks nice, nothing spectacular. I'm sure it has more meaning for Mike than it does for me. Overall completes the thematic package of his mother's home.

PELE ★★

ENEMIES *Polyvinyl*

This is what I thought the Chicago sound was before I moved to Chicago and found out that it's more of a rural Midwest thing than a Chicago thing. In the spirit of Aloha and other Polyvinyl bands with mostly clean noodling guitars and slightly jazzy rock drumming, Pele delivers a bunch of instrumental and "thoughtful" songs that mostly keep the upbeat. This is a deliberate style of music, and my problem with the entire style is the lack of vocals. I rarely find music like this interesting enough to sit by itself. After listening to this album, I still agree with myself.

DESIGN *Kein Soofi (art), Scott Kuwczynski (layout)* ★★★★★

The drawings on this thing are great. Tight charcoal and ink (or something like that). Not much design to it. I actually wish there was no design

on it, and the white frames that enclose the drawings didn't exist. They ruin it a bit for me. Still though, rockin' drawings.

PG99 / MAJORITY RULE ★★

SPLIT *Magic Bullet Records*

The deeper you dig into Pg 99 material the more stolen hardcore material you find. At their best, they're as chaotic as Combat Wounded Veteran. Unfortunately that's a spare quality on this disc. But if you're interested in Page 99, pick up the *Document #5* album, because that's a fucking sick hardcore record. Majority Rule seem to favor intros of bits of metallic ambient noise, followed by metal/hardcore or screamo or whatever it is you kids call it, only with clean sounding guitars!?! Sorry, that's definitely not the hardcore I ever listened to, and the string sounding synths coupled with screaming vocals sounds even sillier. Sorry guys, nice try at doing something original, but I'm still not feeling it. To give them some credit though, the drawn out feedback with backwards vocals at the end of "My Version of Paris" is pretty cool, and the first half of the song that concludes the record, "Packaged Poison" is kind of fun. Also, I tried reading the lyrics, but I gave up and decided it wasn't worth my time.

DESIGN ★★

You can't really go wrong with ambiguous images of industrial cityscapes superimposed by the outline of a fucked up looking mother and child with a color scheme of gold, black, and white. Seriously, what could you possibly complain about without sounding petty? *PJ*

RAMBO / CRUCIAL UNIT ★★

SEA OF STEEL VOL. 1 7" *Ed Walters Records*

The first in a series of 7"s promoting bike usage, and what a first installment it is! Philadelphia's Rambo (ex-members of some of your favorite hardcore/emo bands) takes on the first side, brutalizing three political tracks with their brand of a straight up hardcore punk meets Rorschach with youth crew sing-a-longs. It's energetic and a full-on assault on the senses. Crucial Unit follow it up with humorous thrash with vocals so shrill, it'll break glass and then eat it. The Unit's sound has immensely evolved and they're tighter and more creative than ever before. It's not as straight ahead, giving some time for the circle pit to break up and stomp around, maybe get a drink of water, or peruse the merch. The platter reeks of punk rock, veganism, and moshing in between.

DESIGN *Michael Bukowski* ★★

Fantastic sequential illustration of a bike and car in a stand off. The car is armed with its sheer size while the bicyclist has his U-lock ready. This is a pro-bike compilation. Who do you think

wins? There's a nice sense of composition and line weight, creating an aesthetically appealing 7". The insert suffers the plague of what typically happens with 7" design: the lyrics run across the entire page, creating line lengths that strain the eye. But no one ever knows to break things up into columns. *VC*

RETISONIC ★★

LEAN BEAT *Silverthree Records*

Jason Farrell and Joe Gorelick have gotten together with the intention of making a band with members whose ex-bands are too exhaustive to print. Their most recent and pertinent endeavors are Bluetip and Garden Variety. Sounds like a pretty good cast, right? Well it is. The music is Jason

doing his thing on guitar and vocals, he's not searching all over the place for his sound or trying to break into new ground. Retisonic sounds almost exactly like Bluetip. It's the familiar voice over complicated rock guitar and driving drums. It gets really rock at times, so much so that the guitar licks make me uncomfortable. Overall pretty cool, but very much what you would expect from these two getting together. And that's not bad...

DESIGN *Jason Farrell* ★★

The man is a bad-ass designer. That's just a given. Anyone who pays attention to designers names on punk rock records knows who he is. It's because of people like this that *MediaReader* reviews the design of records. This record looks, as well as sounds, very Bluetip. Jason's got his style and it's definitely his. The spin on this CD is that the top right corner has been cut on both insert and tray card (and even on the fucking one sheet that came with it). The meticulous work to accomplish such a small goal makes me laugh to one shoulder and be proud

that someone did this to the other. It's funny but it's great. Now, if they start selling a million records, who's going to do all this cutting?

RODEO BOY ★★

THE PINE AND PROMISE *Sit-N-Spin*

Jingly indie rock via Pavement and Jason Faulkner. A solid record from these North Carolinians. Chill out, put on this disc and let them keep you up cleaning the house, encouraging you with lifting vocals. Indie pop is back with Rodeo Boy and they're doing it right.

DESIGN ★★

Kind of skimpy packaging but I guess it's all they need. The cover is a cool shot of the band members at Niagara Falls. There is no inside or lyrics, but they pull it off without you noticing it.

AMANDA ROGERS ★★

THE PLACES YOU DWELL *Immigrant Son Records*

A lot of people scoff at the past decades' growing

crop of 'girl and her piano' acts—when it seems like anyone with a voice and a knack for the keys is importing their poetic vision upon the world, the act becomes trite and boring. But then a ray of sunshine beacons from the sky in the form of singer/songwriters like Amanda Rogers, whose songs are eloquent, beautiful and unlike anything I've heard before. Her piano playing crescendos in and out and around, sometimes accompanied by a tiny symphony of strings or guitars, and her voice is as sweet as sugar yet dark and intense just the same. Achy, passionate, sweet—this mess of contradictions is what makes the album perfect.

DESIGN *Sean Mallinson* ★★

Simple. Nice, color-treated photographs of abandoned warehouses and the like, edged around a very tidy, green, plain expanse of space in which you will find the words/lyrics/credits/etc. *MG*

THE ROGERS SISTERS ★★

PURELY EVIL *Troubleman*

Representing the latest trend from NYC, The Rogers Sisters present the angular post-NYC sound á la the Yeah Yeah Yeahs, the Liars, and The White Stripes that's been appropriated from the Talking Heads, Violent Femmes, the Stooges, X Ray Specs and even the Weirdos. And now I don't mean trend as an insult, just more of a factual statistic. The interesting thing with this band is that they are actually taking nods from the Talking Heads and Violent Femmes, mixing a little funk into their jingly guitar driven dance music. I'm pretty up in the air about the whole thing. I think all those contemporary records are pretty good, but the Talking Heads records that were made three decades ago still blow all of these bands out of the water, no contest. Maybe these bands need to step it up somehow and give us something other bands fail too. Whether that's dressing in day glow neon underneath black lights or wearing

lamp shades on your head as a jest to neo-futurists, the idea of what you are doing is important. I want to dance to something that no one else can give me. Get me weirder! Otherwise I'll throw on a record I already have. Again, this is pretty good. Nothing to wet your pants about, but it's better than another bad "indie" rock band.

DESIGN ★

Leaves much to be desired. Most namely a decent looking cover.

SCENE CREAMERS ★★★★★

I SUCK ON THAT EMOTION *Drag City*
This crew is back. You'll remember them from the Make-Up and Nation of Ulysses. Or maybe as that band that you heard got ripped off by the International Noise Conspiracy and Refused. Hmm. Either way, they are back setting the record straight and proving yet again that this posse is setting the course, in advance, for killer retro-rock. The music taunts massive guitar playing via Hendrix that assaults us with every possible *No!No!*: whammy pedals, flangers, hard-panning, phasers, continuous solos, whatever. He has all the tricks and, for the first time in many a decade, utilizes them to mesmerize you while sinking you into the Scene Creamers' nails. Svenonius has set a new standard for himself with his most poignant and hilarious lyrics to date. Humoring us with his anti-corporate-art tune *Session Man* before laying down the multi-leveled chorus to *Wet Paint*: "Wet paint: it looks the same but it ain't." Throughout their legacy of bands, Svenonius and crew have consistently come up with amazing ideas that constantly get ripped off by other bands who seemingly cash in on the framework that these guys have established. Conscious about their continuing position (now spanning decades), Scene Creamers retort: "I was working for the CIA and I didn't even know it. I was working for MCA and I didn't even know it." These guys' (and woman's) allegiance to the true sense of independent music and art have kept them below the mainstream, out of Burger King ads and off of Gap billboards. They could be huge if they folded their ethics, and I'm sure they wouldn't mind getting the respect they deserve, but they're unwilling to bow down to anybody that will compromise their passion. And so it's left up to their stellar music to prove their grandness. And to finish by quoting them again: "I really like it that way."

DESIGN Unaccredited ★★★★★

A beautifully bold drawing/painting/something that was hand done with lots of tools. It's ridiculous and perfect. The insert to the LP was specifically made for the album with a 3-color print job, not skimping by inserting a CD insert. I got the promo CD and sold it to buy the LP.

SINCE BY MAN! ★★☆☆

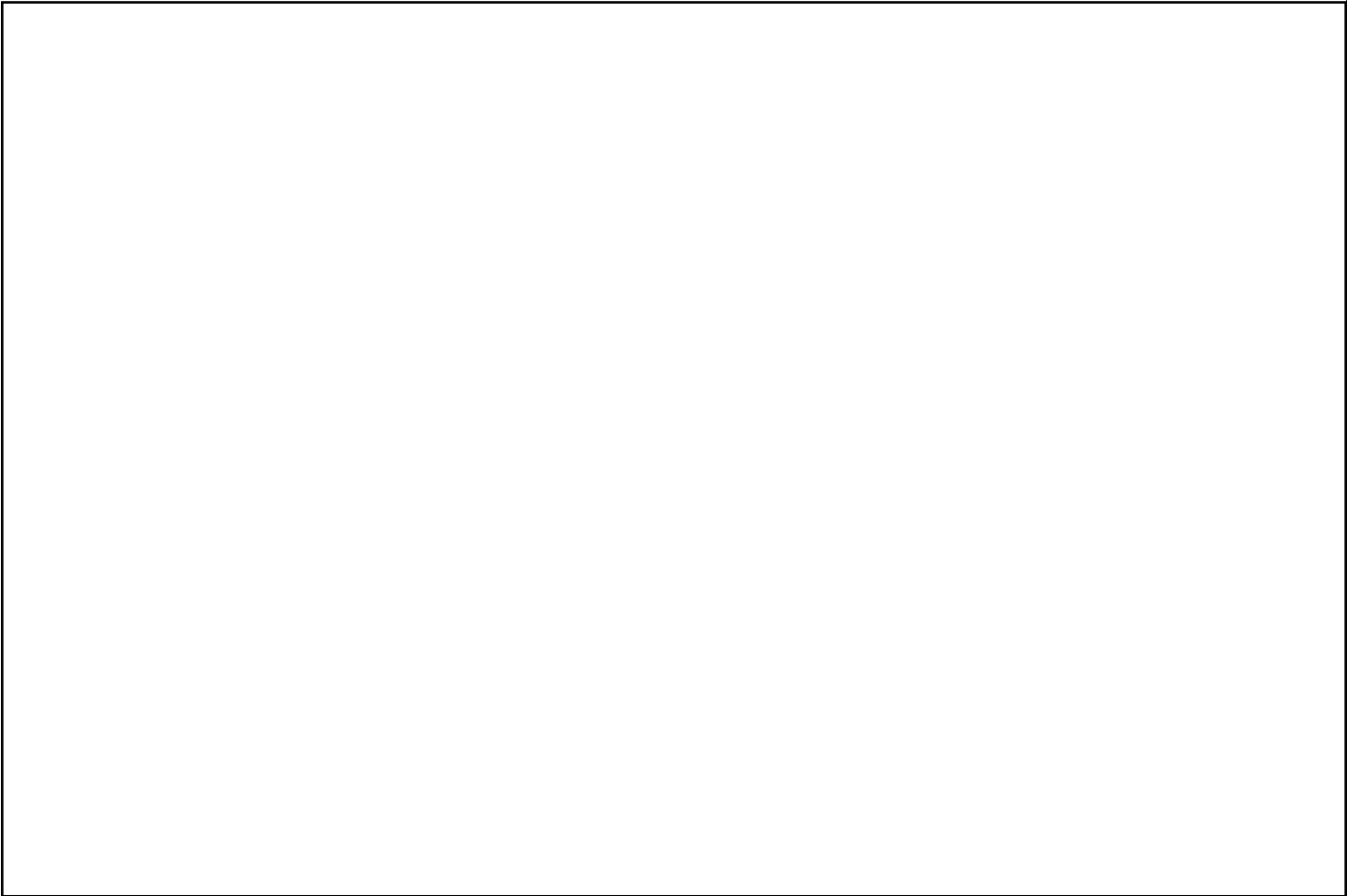
WE SING THE BODY ELECTRIC *Revelation*
This band is a strange melting pot of Refused, Sleepytime Trio, Circus Lupus, and driving punk. Like a rawer, heavier DC sound of years ago. Somehow they pull it off and make it sound awesome and not totally derivative. It shows their influences, but it doesn't sound like their influences. It's a home for raving teenagers. Really good to us non-teenagers as well. Revelation finally got themselves a good one.

DESIGN *Since By Man / 414 Click* ★★★★★

Nice and fresh. I'm happy it doesn't have pictures of them jumping on the cover. If it was on Victory, that would be the template. So thank whatever that it's not on that label. Instead it's a cool meshing of cut and paste looking design with computer top-pings. The fonts are all well chosen and tasteful, as are the colors. This is one of the few records to receive five stars in the design review, and it's because of the following line which appears on the back of the cover: "Helvetica is the typeface of bourgeois consumption." A little confusing, but a bold statement. Way to go nerds.

SORRY ABOUT DRESDEN ★★

LET IT REST *Saddle Creek*
Poppy upbeat rock music possibly comparable to Jason Faulkner or (if you really stretch it) label-mates Cursive, except without the edge. This album sounds too content and it makes me nervous because I know the musicians must have some unease. In any case, the comfort is traded in place of the rawness and push that make an album sound good to me. Poppy driving rock is my less opinionated description; affix 'boring' to the front of that for my more opinionated one.



DESIGN *Doug Koepsel (paintings)* ★★
Not much to it except the paintings of land and skylscapes. Good thing the paintings are nice.

SPITALFIELD ★★

REMEMBER RIGHT NOW *Victory*
Poppy with overproduced vocals and too many vocal tracks. Pulsating vibes that drive a crowd of teenagers crazy while steering older people to grimace, revealing their stained teeth and desperate desire for music that is good, independent of being marketable. What is the marketing model for these guys? Goo Goo what?
DESIGN *Jason Link (design), C. Strong (photos)* ★★★★★
This is one of the most interesting records I've seen in a while. All the photos follow the same scheme of a Chicago street view captioned by the intersection and the temperature at the time of the photo. Maybe I'm a sucker for it because I live in Chicago and know all the places that the pictures

are from. Looking through it makes me bang my head against my desk and scream: *Why the fuck do I live here?* You've got photos from temperatures of 8 degrees on up to 45. Just the idea of it throws images of humans suffocating indoors from their "vintage" radiator heating units. It's too bad they didn't include images of summer at 115 degrees with people dying from heat stroke. Overlooking this shortcoming of the design, I like the sense of intimacy you get between them and their surroundings. Very cool.

STARS AS EYES ★★

ENEMY OF FUN *Tigerbeat 6 Records*
I'm pretty sure I saw Stars as Eyes play live once and I thought it was the most boring thing in the world. I assumed it was just some IDM bullshit (in this case Indifferent Dance Music). Either the CD fares better than their live show or I saw a totally different band. There might not be anything to

freak out about on this album since its just a bunch of chill lo-fi computer music, but having a bit of that stuff mixed up in your record collection is definitely not a bad idea even if there's nothing stand out about it. Wow, I even wrote this review without making a dumb joke about the album title!
DESIGN ★
I wish bands like this could at least come up with interesting cover art. I don't even know what to say about this, it might as well have come in a DJ sleeve. *PJ*

STEREO TOTAL ★★

MUSIQUE AUTOMATIQUE *Kill Rock Stars*
"If I were to listen to French Pop, I'd just rather listen to Gainsbourg," a friend of mine remarked as we were lounging on my porch, listening to an April March record. Fair enough. She's from L.A., anyways. I tried her tolerance by putting on *I Love Serge*, a compilation of various electronic

artists interpreting the beloved Gainsbourg. "If I were to listen to Gainsbourg, I'd rather just listen to Gainsbourg." To her, and like many indie rock hipsters out there, Serge is the bottom line when it comes to French Pop. He's so definitive that they can't seem to name anyone else. ¶ It's a shame, really. To refuse to acknowledge that French Pop hasn't evolved since Gainsbourg's late '60s classics or that artists outside of France can take a stab at the genre seems foolish. Why discount the products of such influence? I know it probably has more to do with priorities (unfortunately Modest Mouse might seem *more* important) and apathy (Indie rockers? Slackers? No way!), but such listeners would be missing out on the brilliance of Stereo Total. ¶ This Berlin duo attacks their Gainsbourg influence with a healthy dose of new wavey punk. Or is it punky new wave? *Musique Automatique* being their fifth record, Stereo Total continue on with their pogo happy dance pop carving out a shell of songs about love, the neu-

trality and efficiency of humans, and, well, love again. The vox swap gender as well as language (French, German, and English), expertly exploiting the exotic with a brimming sense of sincerity. They pull off the kitsch and then turn it on itself, singing in French in a Japanese accent, German in Turkish, Spanish in English and so on. The complexity continues on with fancy wordplay, Situationist themes, and other cultural puns. How could someone expect such substance in such an innocent package? The CD covers a whopping 21 tracks—creating a rock to dance palette diverse enough to escape redundancy, while offering more than a mouthful to hungry listeners.
DESIGN *Cabine* ★★
Taking a nod to 80s video games, low budget children's television shows, and pastels, Stereo Total are 3-D beings existing in a 2-D world. Using the ever popular Illustrator to paint by numbers, Cabine throws the band into what could easily pass as a toy package. It could be one of those educa-

tional button pushing jigs that runs on a 9-volt battery. You know, My First Adding Machine, the Digital Abacus. To perpetuate even more campiness, the gradients, kitschy type, and imagery are over the top making an effective ugly that charms rather than harms. *VC*

STERLING ★★★★★

S/T File 13
Typically, I can't stand instrumental rock, but Sterling manage to play it in a way that is so completely engaging and interesting and atypical that it becomes irresistible. First things first, these guys actually know how to play their instruments well, and they also know how to play together well without falling into some crappy genre type or jam-band nonsense. There's a lot going on here, from classical guitar licks to jazzy fills and superb bass lines to the beautifully rendered piano pieces. The music is pretty, but not in a lame way, actually more in a damn intense and brutal way.

DESIGN ★★

The cover art seems like a painting (or a detail of one) depicting the hellish underworld. Otherwise, the layout is pretty simple and sort of looks like it was all slapped together at the last minute. Don't let it fool ya. *MG*

TURN PALE ★★★★★

KILL THE LIGHTS *What Else? Records*
Members of the late great Panoply Academy have appeared in the form of a well-oiled gothic dance machine, or rather, a time machine that will quickly whisk you back to the late 70's/early 80's postpunk, dark wave and early goth sounds. And fuck, Turn Pale has perfected this resurgence of musical time travel. They play songs that will satisfy the legions of postpunk revivalists, but at the same time satisfy those of us whose audio delights are more firmly rooted in the twisted, fucked up, shadowy corners of the world. They channel Joy Division, PiL, Bauhaus and most notably, the Birthday Party, without being a rip-off band at all. The vocalist alone gives such an unusual performance of brooding and commanding drawls; it's enough creative originality to give the band their own genre box to stand upon. One of the best I've heard this year, by far.
DESIGN *4K Design* ★★
Like the music, the cover art is dark; a very Schiele-esque figure drawing adorns the cover, superimposed over a photo. Black, blood red and white shading. No type or words. Simple and creepy. *MG*

TUSK ★★

GET READY *He Who Corrupts, Inc.*
A few weeks before this writing, I finally got a chance to witness the new Chicago spectacle called Pelican. This new Hydrahead (Cave In, Isis) band pounded through Isis-like stoner metal with accessible riffage, sludging rhythms, and change ups galore. Their riffs were so hook-laden, that the guitarists *grinned* before each breakdown, as if to say "Oh my god, I'm just about to play this REALLY sick riff. I'm soooooo excited!" By the end of their set, I was nodding slowly to what might be construed as a slow motion head-bang. ¶ Word on the street says that Tusk is Pelican's sister band, as many claimed that it's "Pelican, but with vocals" which left the intrigue of what the vocals might sound like. Tusk takes from the same roots as Pelican, but aligns itself more with Hydrahead bands from five years ago. Metallic hardcore that's more Slayer than Warzone. Tusk comes off as a less competent Converge, which is okay because Converge is sometimes capable of inhuman feats. It has all the stylings of a Boston band circa 1997, although it has a midtempo Midwestern swing to it. The songs also clock in at about a minute and a half each, which really just makes it an EP if we were to keep comparing it to Cave In and Converge. Luckily, the performance is sincere and lacks the glossy contrived feeling other contemporaries in this genre somehow manage (Poison the Well, Hopes Fall, etc.). If I were to coach this band, I'd suggest to take it one direction (metal or hardcore) instead of halfway doing both.

DESIGN *Jody Minnoch and unknown artist* ★

It looks like a backdrop to a low budget science fiction movie. If Star Wars fans got smart and stopped funding George Lucas at the box office by the time *Episode 12: Jawas Gone Wild* was entering production, it might look like this. It's not the Photoshop quality of the composition that bothers me, but it's just cheesy rendition of what everyone tends to see on sci-fi novels. The typeface used for the titling is effective, though. *VC*

VIZA-NOIR ★★

NO RECORD *Flamethouel*
Back with their second record, Viza-Noir hit us with upbeat raw rock falling showcasing an occasional propensity towards Nation of Ulysses, but more often a gravitation towards a dirtier Mission of Burma. In contrast from what I remember of their last record, this one has virtually undistorted guitars, which works nicely sometimes but gets too twangy too often. When they keep the intensity up they rock hard, but they lose me when they do the more monotonous stuff with droning vocals.
DESIGN *E. E'rocle (drawing), Dan M. (print)* ★★★★★
Scan of a screenprint of sketchy drawings creating a skyscape of tall buildings and the river. Basically a really well done location sketch of Chicago.

Colors are great. It would be cool if it was actually screened, but what a pain in the ass that would be (but they did it last time around!). The jewel case opens up magically to expose half the print. This makes no sense to describe, but it's a killer package. Got any prints for review?

STEVE VON TILL ★★ ★★

If I SHOULD FALL TO THE FIELD *Neurot Recordings* Neurosis guitarist/vocalist takes a break from the doomy mayhem with another dark and gloomy solo conquest. His take on old forms of folk music is exemplified by the use of the Hammond organ, acoustic guitar, banjo, and fiddle. He also uses electric guitars to add a heavier element to the songs, and his distinct, low-pitched voice (like Tom Waits with less gruff and more vibrato) hauntingly guides each track. Versions of older songs (the traditional "Am I Born to Die" and Neil Young's "Running Dry") reconnect Von Till to the past; his originals are a nod to those times while maintaining a modern composure.

DESIGN ★★ ★★

A Van-Gogh-styled painting sits among a background of blood red, type font, no complexity here, but it looks nice. *MG*

V/A MICHIGAN FEST 2002 ★★ ★★ ★★

DVD *Bifocal Media* Bifocal is up to it again. Always with a camera (or six) in their hands, this time they've documented the Michigan Fest of 2002. On DVD, they've included one song by every band that played (!!!, Crooked Fingers, D4, Dis Plan, Hot Snakes, Isis, Milemarker, Owls, Ted Leo, etc.), and created an interface that lets you either jump to the specific band's song or watch it all the way through. Between clips include snippets of interviews with the artists, label maestros, and other general nerd types. Sound quality is terrific for live action, the camera shots are hi-quality and the edits are good. Tons of work went into this thing. Buy one festhead.

DANCE OF DAYS

Mark Anderson & Mark Jenkins
Akashic Books • akashicbooks.com



I purchased my first Fugazi record when I was 15 years old. It was a first of many firsts. It was my first time ordering records through mail order. It was one of the first purchases I made with my first paycheck from the one hour photo lab. It was my first exposure to the culture of underground punk.

When the package arrived from the Dischord offices with a handwritten note from Amy Pickering, it was a little disorienting. I immediately thought, "You mean, there's actually people packing these orders? Haven't the robots taken over yet? I hope they have those flying cars they promised in *The Jetsons* by the time I get my driver's license!" Then I imagined poor Amy in some dank basement spending all day writing these notes under a desk lamp—which was probably not too far from the truth. Her note made my purchase feel more genuine, more part of a community, as opposed to a record-peddling business that fueled my suburban teen angst.

And a community it is. At any bookstore, the amount of punk documentation is plentiful, but nearly 90% of it covers The Sex Pistols or the British invasion of the late 70s. There are very few books widely available that cover punk in the 80s and beyond. It's unfortunate, because, to any casual browser, it lends to the idea that the late 70s era of punk is all that mattered. True to Fugazi's philosophy, the present has been well-documented via music (and video), but there has been little account of the subculture and ideas that have kept punk thriving into the new millennium—punk's not dead, it's just grown up.

A notable exception to all this is *Dance of Days*, a first person account by Mark Anderson of Positive Force, documenting the twenty years he's been involved with the DC punk scene. Mark Jenkins (film writer for *The City Paper* and music writer for *The Washington Post*) also collaborated with Anderson on the book, and polished it with his professional editorial flourishes.

Fans of punk know that the scene has evolved immensely during the 25+ years of its existence—punk has become softer, louder, more urgent, more laidback, more commercial, more underground, simpler, more complex, etc.

The branches are so diverse, it's often hard to really pinpoint every single niche under the overlying idea. And let's not forget the movements within punk that have been spawned since The Stooges' professed pure nihilism. Riot grrl, racism, spirituality, animal rights, and straight edge are amongst the many waves that have pounded on the coast, along with the reactionary movements they have triggered in turn.

Anderson's story is a behemoth, as the DC scene has been a major influence in the global progression of punk. In particular, straight edge, DIY, emo, and riot grrl were heavily aided by DC's volatile punk scene and are now heralded as institutional pillars within contemporary punk, which is why *Dance of Days* is an important document. Washington, DC was home to Minor Threat, Dischord Records, Rites of Spring, and Bratmobile as their burgeoning ideas became worldwide spectacles—whether they wanted them to or not.

Covering several bases, Anderson and Jenkins' document gathers historical accounts in the form of interviews, anecdotes, and the authors' own personal perception of a group of bands and the local community. With the exception of The Bad Brains and Bikini Kill, the story mainly reads like a detailed history of everyone on Dischord's roster. The story also covers the scene's impact on a national level, covering the tangents of "neighborhood kid" Henry Rollins (then Garfield) to Black Flag and Scream's Dave Grohl's entrance to Nirvana. Likewise, the book covers how national attention affected DC—primarily in regards to Minor Threat's popularity, which put the nation's capital on the Punk map, and to the scene during the height of the post-Nirvana media frenzy.

The interesting parts of the book lie in anecdotes of how inside jokes turn into catalysts for change, namely in the documentation of Revolution Summer, where the Dance of Dead punks turned on hardCore's machismo with raw emotion. That, and witnessing the beginnings of what we now consider legend—such as when Ian MacKaye and Jeff Nelson's met as 15 year old rebels—is always fun for a laugh.

However, *Dance of Days* falls short in a lot of the documentation, eschewing many bands that performed outside of the Dischord orbit. Hardcore legends Swiz get a brief mention as well as no-wave pioneers Half Japanese. Who else could be omitted in a document of "Two Decades of Punk in the Nation's Capital?" Obviously many, so it's important to consider that this is the story as told by Anderson and Jenkins, who do not claim to be authorized

biographers or experts of this niche in music history. Understandably, the fact that so much time is devoted to Dischord's roster means that lengthy chapters cover uneventful band member swapping—a sure turn off to casual readers.

This is the book's third printing, with the first two on Soft Skull and the latter on Johnny Temple's Akashic Books. Much like Temple's own letdowns with Girls Against Boys' continuous shafting from record labels, the authors had a rough time keeping the book on Soft Skull—who was spending its capital battling lawyers over a biography on George W. Bush.

Not much is different except for a new preface by Jenkins, new graphic design, and an extra chapter by Anderson, which is essentially a shoddy collage of updates since the book's first printing. There's a brief update of what the book's bands have been up for the past two years, as well as mention of newer bands that are integral to DC's music scene since the narrative ended in the late 90s (Katy Otto, Crispus Attucks, and—for better or worse—Good Charlotte). The mention of Good Charlotte is justified, but the amount of space devoted to them is extraneous, which makes it seem as if Anderson is a spokesman for the band in a "Justify Your Existence" interview in *The Onion*.

The book is thick with information, all intertwined and detailed with humorous tidbits and some extremely moving passages. If you haven't read it the first two times around, it's now received a facelift which should demand your attention. It's the story of a community and its triumphs and struggles—the kind of stuff that keeps communities together.

—Vincent Chung